

SYLLABUS: PHI 2010H-0202
HONORS INTRODUCTION TO PHILOSOPHY
3 Credit Hours

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University of Central Florida
Office:

Spring Semester 2012
4:30-5:45 Mon/Wed
Location: BHC 126

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Course Description

This is an introduction to the activity of philosophizing. We shall be reading and discussing some of the most profound philosophers in the western tradition, whose writings will lead us to raise fundamental questions and attempt to answer them through thinking, discussing, and writing. Such questions include: What is the good life? How should I live? What do I know? How do I know that God exists? Why does evil exist? Am I free to choose what I do? Through exploring such questions as they arise, students will be provided with an introduction to the general areas of philosophy and will also be given a general orientation into the history of philosophy.

Course Goals

- Students will be able to answer the question "What is philosophy?" in a detailed and sophisticated way.
- Students will discover, identify, and explain philosophical problems.
- Students will be able to analyze meanings in philosophical texts from diverse historical and cultural contexts.
- Students will actively engage in philosophical dialogue by critically discussing and evaluating philosophical arguments.
- Students will be able to demonstrate knowledge of and critical thinking about philosophical concepts and the theoretical and critical principles in philosophical thinking from diverse historical and cultural contexts.
- Students will take responsibility for and ownership of their own personal philosophical development.
- Students will become wiser.

Required Texts (listed in the order we shall read them in class)

Plato & Aristophanes, *Four Texts on Socrates*, translated by Thomas G. West and Grace Starry West (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984). (Some of these texts are also available at <http://socrates.clarke.edu> and audio versions of some texts can also be found at <http://librivox.org/>.)

Spinoza, Baruch. *Ethics, Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect, and Selected Letters*. Edited by Seymour Feldman. Translated by Samuel Shirley. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992. (This text is also available online at <http://home.earthlink.net/~tneff/index3.htm>.)

Kierkegaard, Søren. *The Essential Kierkegaard*. Eds. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Portable Nietzsche*. Ed. and trans. Walter Kaufman New York: Penguin Books, 1982.

N.B. There will also be additional shorter readings assigned.

Course Requirements

➤ eCommunity

In order to receive electronic communication from the instructor, you are required to make sure that your e-mail address is accurate at www.ecommunity.ucf.edu. Please note that only you can change your e-mail address at this site. You are also required to add a brief biography consisting of a minimum of four grammatically correct sentences. This assignment is worth five points and is due by 11:55 pm on Wednesday, January 18th.

Please note that if you e-mail the instructor you should include your full name at the end of your message, as the instructor may not respond to messages from unidentified students. Also, it is against university policy for instructors to include grades in e-mail messages, so please do not ask about your grades in an e-mail. Come to see me in my office instead or go to MyGrades at <https://my.ucf.edu/>.

➤ GEP Assessment Assignment

Students are required to complete the GEP assessment pre- and post-tests available via the <https://my.ucf.edu/> portal. Once inside, click on "Online Course Tools," and then "GEP_PHI2010 - 11Spring_0001" to complete the pre- and post-tests (see deadlines in Course Schedule below). Regarding the Pre-tests, students will earn two points for each test attempted (six points total) regardless

of how many questions are answered correctly. Students must complete the post-tests at the end of the semester during exam week and will earn one point for each correctly answered question. The post-test score will be based on nine points with all extra points earned counting as bonus points. Additional information will be given in class.

➤ **Class Participation**

The instructor will use various pedagogical activities (e.g., people hunts, timed writing tasks, small group discussion, etc.) to enhance and facilitate student learning. Consequently, class attendance and participation are essential. Students will not have the opportunity to make up missed classroom exercises, which will affect one's grade adversely in the case of unexcused absences. Students who miss class work because of official excused absences including religious holidays—which require appropriate documentation—will not be penalized, as the points from those exercises will not be included in the student's final points. However, in the event of sudden illness or emergency when it is not possible to see a doctor, students may be excused and/or able to make up missed work when they are better. However, it is necessary that students notify the instructor as soon as possible (an email message is fine) regarding a possible absence to determine whether the absence will be excused. If you cannot notify the instructor before a missed class, then you must notify the instructor within two days after the missed class to have him consider whether the absence will be excused. After two days without any notification the absence will be marked as unexcused. If a student is excused on a day that a graded assignment is due, then after communication between the student and the instructor, the instructor will determine when the student will be expected to submit the assignment.

➤ **Reading Assignments**

Readings of approximately 20-40 pages are assigned in advance for each class; see the class schedule below. We shall do our best to follow this schedule, but make adjustments when necessary. Classes should be a mixture of lecture and discussion, and the reading assignments will help students to follow the lectures and participate in the classroom activities and discussions. Students should read the assigned texts carefully and come to class mindful of the content of the readings. Students are not expected to understand all the details of the material but should have an understanding of the major points or issues discussed in the readings. Students should feel free to ask questions about the material, and given that this is an honors section, all students are expected to participate in classroom discussions. But remember that it is important that all students are respected and that questions that are not directly relevant to the discussion are asked after class.

A note for the wise: “philosophy is notoriously difficult” (*Twenty Questions*, p. ix) and the philosophical texts you will be reading and discussing will be from primary sources, which means that you will be leaping into the bona-fide, honest-to-gosh *doing* of philosophy from the very beginning. Because these readings are neither paraphrased nor boiled down, they are often extremely difficult. Hence, this word to the astute: very rarely does a single reading of a philosophical text suffice to disclose all of its implications clearly and unambiguously. Therefore, an appropriate method of study is as follows. (1) Read and reflect on the text before coming to class. Recite to yourself (or a friend) what you understood about the text, and form questions about what you did not understand. (2) Attend class and engage in the classroom activities. Ask questions about the perplexities you find—if not in class, I encourage you to come and speak to me in my office. (3) re-read the text as soon as possible after the class period and continue to perform self-recitation. If you are mindful about your studies and follow these steps you will not need to cram for the exams and should do very well in the course. It is important to realize that philosophers have left us with some of the most difficult writings we will ever read, and that philosophical perplexity is central to human existence. So, if we stick with it and don't get discouraged philosophy can be one of the most rewarding experiences we will have.

➤ **Writing Assignments**

Timed Writings:

In order to facilitate student learning there will be approximately ten to fifteen unannounced timed writing assignments (approx. three to five minutes) throughout the course on material that has been assigned or previously covered. These assignments may occur at the beginning, middle, or end of class, and they may also occur in groups. Consequently, it is essential to be well-prepared and mindful of the course content. Each timed writing assignment will be worth four points. Generally, timed writings cannot be made up, but if you have an illness or otherwise reasonable excuse (which must be approved by the instructor) for missing a timed writing, the missed exercise will not count against you and the points will not be included in your total points. Timed writing assignments can only be made up if you have an official excused absence due to a university activity.

The timed writing assignments will be assessed as follows.

4 points	= completely satisfactory attempt to answer question
3 points	= limited, but generally satisfactory attempt; or completely satisfactory attempt to answer question, but student missed part of class
2 point	= marginal attempt made with some accurate content, but not fully satisfactory or lacking in detail
1 point	= no attempt, but student present for entire class period

0 points = student absent

Mindful Reading Assignments:

Throughout the course students will be required to submit two MRAs in which they (1) *identify a passage* from an assigned reading that has affected (deepened, changed, confirmed, qualified, raised new questions, etc.) the way they think and (2) *explain the significance of the passage* (e.g., its difficulty, originality, insight, truthfulness, etc.) and how their thinking has been affected (deepened, changed, confirmed, qualified, raised new questions, etc.). The assignments (see class schedule below for deadlines) should include the passage and reference (singled-spaced, use ellipses if more than 50 words) and the explanation (double-spaced, 200 to 400 words). MRAs must be submitted electronically at www.turnitin.com by the due date (Class ID: 4700726; Password: Kierkegaard). Late assignments received within 24 hours of the deadline will lose five points. Late assignments received after 24 hours of the deadline will not earn any points. Note that if a problem with the website may lead to a submission being late, then the student should be sure to email the assignment to the instructor at michael.strawser@ucf.edu before the deadline.

Note that students should not duplicate written work in the various assignments. See below for *Test Creation Assignments*.

➤ **Tests**

See the class schedule below for tests and approximate point totals. Throughout the semester there will be two non-cumulative tests—a mid-term and a final exam—that students will help to create. Part of the test score will also be a take-home component (see Appendix for more information on the “Test Creation Assignment” or TCA). Anything from the assigned readings and the lectures will be considered fair game for the tests, which may consist of multiple choice, true or false, short answer, and essay questions. Reviews will be given in class, but it is the student’s responsibility to compile a study guide for each exam.

Students are required to bring both raspberry scantrons and notebook paper to each exam. Students must also have their PIDs to include on the scantron and will lose points if they do not follow these requirements. Also, only blank paper and a pen and/or pencil can be brought to the desk when taking a test.

Additional explanations of tests and grading criteria will be presented in class. Students should note that grades are earned based on standards (excellent, good, fair, poor) and not simply “given.”

Missed exams cannot be made up—except for official university activities (requiring prior permission) or serious illnesses (requiring a formal doctor’s excuse) or serious emergencies (requiring consultation with the instructor and his

consent within 48 hours after missing a test). If a student does not take a test, then he or she will receive a “0”.

Grading

Students will be able to follow their progress in the course by the record of their grades found at MyGrades at www.my.ucf.edu. The student’s final grade will be determined by dividing the total points received by the total possible points. The percentage will be judged according to the following scale. Note that the instructor uses a standard grading scale. However, the instructor reserves the right to adjust the percentages required for final grades based on overall student performance. This would only be done for the benefit of all students. In other words, the percentages required below would only be lowered, not raised, in the event of a curve.

GRADE	GRADE POINT VALUE	PERCENTAGE
A	4.00	90-100
B	3.00	80-89
C	2.00	70-79
D	1.00	60-69
F	0.00	59 and below

Students’ grades will be based on the following points:

eCommunity	5
Timed Writings	40-60 (approx.)
MRAs	30 (2 x 15)
Mid-Term Exam	100
Final Exam	100
TCA’s	50 (2 x 25)
GEP Pre- and Post-tests	15 (projected; may include bonus points)
Class Participation	10 (attendance, active participation in class, observable effort)
Total Points	350-370 (This is a projection and may be modified.)

Incompletes will be given only if a student could not complete the course requirements because of something over which he or she had little or no control, e.g., an illness or death in the family. To receive an “I” for the course a student must have done at least some of the work for the course, and he or she must speak to me before the final examination.

Academic Policy

Students are expected to follow UCF's Golden Rule for academic excellence and integrity. Regarding excellence, this means, at the very least, that when in the classroom, students should be attending *completely* (i.e., 100% or wholeheartedly) to the intellectual work of the day. Thus, for example, abstractions from electronic devices will not be permitted, and computers may only be used for note-taking in class.

Any inappropriate behavior, academic or otherwise, will not be tolerated and may be reported to the Office of Student Conduct. For further guidance, please see www.goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/. Students' work will be submitted to www.turnitin.com for authentication. Students found guilty of academic dishonesty or plagiarism will receive at minimum an F for their work and be referred to UCF's Office of Student Conduct. They may also receive an F for the course and a "Z" grade designation.

PHI 2010: Class Schedule

Date	Readings/Content	Assignments
Monday, January 9	Introduction to Philosophy	
Wednesday, January 11	Course Mechanics	Read Syllabus
Monday, January 16	No Class	MLK, Jr. Holiday
Wednesday, January 18	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> 41-61	Pre-tests and eCommunity exercise due by 11:55 pm
Monday, January 23	Plato, <i>Apology</i> , 63-81	
Wednesday, January 25	Plato, <i>Apology</i> , 81-97	
Monday, January 30	Plato, <i>Crito</i> , 99-114 & <i>Phaedo</i> selection	
Wednesday, February 1	Aristophanes, <i>Clouds</i> , 115-128, 131-136	
Monday, February 5	Aristophanes, <i>Clouds</i> , 142-176	
Wednesday, February 8	Kierkegaard, <i>Early Writings</i> , 7-12, 20-21, 27-36, <i>Either/Or</i> , 37-46, 50-62	
Monday, February 13	Kierkegaard, <i>Either/Or</i> , 66-83, <i>Fear and Trembling</i> & <i>Stages on Life's Way</i> , 93-101, 182	

Wednesday, February 15	Kierkegaard, <i>Philosophical Fragments</i> , 116-125	
Monday, February 20	Kierkegaard, <i>Concluding Unscientific Postscript</i> , 187-190, 206-208, 238-241	
Wednesday, February 22	Kierkegaard, <i>Works of Love</i> , 277-311	TCA due by 11:55 pm
Monday, February 27	Review	
Wednesday, February 29	Mid-Term Exam	Mid-Term Exam; MRA 1 on Plato or Kierkegaard due Friday, March 2 nd by 11:55 pm
Monday, March 5	No Class	Spring Break
Wednesday, March 7	No Class	Spring Break
Monday, March 12	Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> , Part I	N.B. Read extensively focusing mainly of the definitions and propositions. You needn't worry about all the details of the demonstrations. Focus on the main ideas.
Wednesday, March 14	Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> , Part II (Focus on p7, p35, p40s2, p41, p42)	
Monday, March 19	Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> , Part III	
Wednesday, March 21	Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> , Part III	
Monday, March 26	Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> , Part IV	
Wednesday, March 28	Spinoza, <i>Ethics</i> , Part V	
Monday, April 2	Ethics	
Wednesday, April 4	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , 121-153	
Monday, April 9	Nietzsche, <i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i> , 186-191	
Wednesday, April 11	Nietzsche, <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> , 463-492	
Monday, April 16	Nietzsche, <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> , 492-531	
Wednesday, April 18	Nietzsche, <i>Twilight of the Idols</i> , 532-563	TCA 2 due by 11:55 pm
Monday, April 23	Review	MRA 2 on Spinoza or Nietzsche due by Friday, April 27 th by 11:55 pm
Monday, April 30, 4:00-6:50 pm	Final Exam Period 4:00-6:50 pm	Final Exam; Post-tests due by 11:55 pm

N.B.

The instructor welcomes comments and suggestions about the course and encourages feedback throughout the course. He also reserves the right to amend this syllabus at his discretion.

Appendices

Test Creation Assignment (TCA)

Instructions: Students will individually create four test questions that they would like to see on the final exam. The questions should include one multiple choice, one true/false, one short answer (answered in a phrase or couple sentences), and one essay question (answered in several paragraphs, one to two pages, i.e., 200-400 words). Each question should be on different material/texts. Students will submit the assignments at www.turnitin.com by the due date (Class ID: 4700726; Password: Kierkegaard). Late assignments received within 24 hours of the deadline will lose five points. Late assignments received after 24 hours of the deadline will not earn any points.

Although not all questions need to meet the following criteria, at least one question should cover each of the following learning objectives (if not more):

- A. Would your question allow students to demonstrate understanding of the course material?
- B. Would your question allow students to analyze central concepts and arguments?
- C. Would your question allow students to evaluate multiple perspectives of an issue?
- D. Would your question allow students to synthesize perspectives into a(n) answer, argument, position that one can live with?

Using the letters for the criteria A, B, C, and D, students must indicate after each question which objective it addresses. Students must also provide answers for all of the questions they create.

Grading: Students will be graded according to the following general rubric:

1. Content of questions and answers. For example, considerations of whether the question is well written and contains appropriate options (in the case of multiple choice) and the depth of answers provided as well as length and whether all learning objectives have been covered.

2. Quality of questions and answers. For example, considerations of whether your questions exhibit appropriate familiarity with the topics under consideration and the significance of the material, lack of typographical and other errors, creativity, accuracy, and thoughtfulness of answers provided.
3. Timeliness. See above on late assignments.
4. Each question and answer is assigned the following points:
 1. Multiple Choice (5; note that brief explanation or reference must be given for the answer)
 2. True/False (4; note that brief explanation or reference must be given for the answer)
 3. Short answer (4)
 4. Long essay (12)

Be Contemplative and Creative!

A Possible Bonus: Selected student questions will be used on the in class tests, so if your questions are selected you should already know the answers to those questions!

Bonus: Student Teaching Presentation (STP)

Students may earn up to 15 bonus points by giving an optional “student teaching presentation” on an approved topic during the semester. Students would be expected to research and teach about a particular philosophical argument, problem, or theory that is not part of the required reading material. Students must consult with the instructor at least one week prior to their presentation, and presentations would be scheduled when they would be most relevant in the class schedule. Student teaching presentations should be from 10 to 15 minutes in length (not including questions and discussion) and should have some visual aid (e.g., handout, powerpoint, outline on board). Students will be marked on clarity, completeness (including having completed the presentation requirements), and preparation. Students may refer to notes, but should not read their presentations. The final day to request a student teaching presentation is Wednesday, March 14th.

Here is a list of some possibilities: The Pre-Socratics, Stoicism, Plato’s “theory of forms,” Aristotle’s “virtue theory,” Anselm’s ontological argument for God, Aquinas’s cosmological arguments, Cartesian dualism, empiricism (Locke, Berkeley, or Hume), Leibniz’s monadology, Kantian deontology, Kantian transcendental idealism, Hegelianism, utilitarianism, ethical vegetarianism, moral relativism, emotivism, Sartre’s existentialism, William James’ “The Will to Believe,” Wittgenstein’s philosophy of language, feminism, free will vs. determinism, etc.