



PHIL 101: Introduction to Philosophy: Main Problems

Course Overview

This course has two related objectives. First, the course aims to acquaint you with some of the most prominent debates in the Western philosophical tradition. You will be asked to think carefully and critically about the merits of various prominent responses to the following three questions.

- Do we have free will?
- What is the relationship between the mind and the body?
- How much can we really know?

By the end of the term, you will be well positioned to develop and argue for your own answers to these questions.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the course aims to equip you with skills that can be usefully applied in a variety of domains outside of philosophy. Through both your writing and your discussion with your peers in the forum, you will learn to

- communicate clearly and concisely
- effectively reconstruct arguments for a position or view from a piece of text
- critically evaluate arguments
- construct persuasive arguments in defense of a position or view
- anticipate potential objections to a position or view.

This course has no prerequisites and is designed for students without prior exposure to philosophy.

Required Text

See the course description for up-to-date textbook information.

We will read works by contemporary as well as by classic philosophers. You may find the styles of certain classic philosophers more difficult to read than those of contemporary philosophers. Eventually, the more archaic styles will become familiar to you. Until that time, you should expect to spend extra time working through these texts.

Although many of the reading assignments are rather short, they are difficult. You should plan to read over the assignments several times because you will probably not understand everything after just one reading.

Library Services (including e-reserves)

Students enrolled in Carolina Courses Online have access to the UNC Library System. Visit Distance Education Library Services to access a wide array of online services and resources including e-reserves, online databases, online journals, online books, and live help with research and library access. Most online resources require you to log in with your Onyen and password. If you have any trouble finding the resource that you need or logging in to a resource, you can contact the library through the contact information at Distance Education Library Services. You can chat live about your problem, or send an email to request assistance.

Your Instructor

See the course description for instructor information.

Course Requirements

This course requires you to complete reading quizzes and participate in the discussion forum. You must also complete two papers and a final exam. This workload is the same as the course as taught in the classroom, so you should be prepared to put just as much effort into this course as you would into any classroom course. Detailed information about each of these requirements is below.

Reading Quizzes

During most lessons you will complete a short multiple-choice reading quiz (in the Quizzes and Exams section of Sakai). These quizzes will assess your reading comprehension. You must take the quiz as many times as it takes for you earn a perfect score. This requirement is meant to encourage you to clarify your understanding of any part of the reading that you do not grasp the first time. You can post questions about the reading quizzes and respond to each other's questions on the Open Discussion Forum, explained in more detail below.

You must complete the reading quiz at least seventy-two hours (three days) prior to the end of the lesson, by 11:59 pm. For each time a student does not achieve a perfect score on a reading quiz prior to this deadline, he/she will receive a 5 percent deduction in his/her participation grade for the course.

Discussion Forum

The discussion forum is our online version of a classroom discussion, and it serves several purposes.

- It provides an intellectual community for the class.
- It helps you pace your work so that you won't be tempted to leave all the reading until a few days before a major assignment is due.
- It allows me to determine when students are confused about major points so I can offer corrections.

You can access the discussion forums using the Forums link in the left navigation bar of Sakai. (Don't

worry if all you see is a blank white screen at first; sometimes it takes a while for the forums to load.)

Two types of forums will run throughout the term.

- The optional **Open Discussion Forum**, where you can post any questions or comments related to the material. I will not guide the discussion in this forum.
- The required **Lesson Forum**, containing prompts that I post for each lesson.

You are required to participate in the Lesson Forum during most weeks, either by answering one of the prompts or by responding to others' posts. (The specific requirements are explained below.) Discussion will be suspended during exam periods.

Roles

For Lessons 1 and 12, all of you are required to post about the same topic and your posts will be graded for completion.

For Lessons 2 through 11, I will divide the class into two groups. Each week, the students in each group will alternate between completing the Role A assignment and the Role B assignment on the Lesson Forum. For example, if you are in the group that completes the Role A assignment for Lesson 2, then you will complete the Role B assignment for Lesson 3, and so on.

Regardless of which role you have been assigned for a particular lesson, you are always encouraged to participate in our discussion more fully and comprehensively than what is required. For example, if you are assigned to Role A for a given lesson, you are certainly encouraged to respond to posts that others have submitted in response to your initial essay. The discussion forum for each lesson will close at 11:59 pm on the last day of that lesson.

Role A: Students in the group assigned to Role A for a particular lesson are required to post a response (between 200 and 300 words) to one of the prompts forty-eight hours before the end of the lesson. These responses will be graded for quality as short essays, and I will provide feedback to you on both the content and on the quality of your writing. The prompts will require you to go beyond demonstrating comprehension in your responses by asking you to critically evaluate arguments presented in the reading and to apply the views presented in the reading in new ways.

Role B: Students in the group assigned to Role B for the lesson will have forty-eight hours to post a minimum of two responses to the essays that students in Role A have already posted on the Lesson Forum. These response posts ought to engage respectfully, but critically, with the essays to which they respond and should be *at least* a few (grammatically correct) sentences long. Each of the posts submitted by students in Role B will be graded for satisfactory completion. This means that posts that demonstrate a gross misunderstanding, are not grammatically correct, and/or are difficult to parse will not receive full credit. Role B posts are due by 11:59 pm on the last day of the lesson.

Grading

Each of your five Role A discussion posts count as 20 percent of your discussion forum grade. (And your discussion forum grade counts as 20 percent of your final course grade.) Your Role B responses

and any additional posts you make will be factored into your course participation grade.

To ensure that the discussion forum is successful in encouraging students to engage with one another, late discussion posts will not be accepted and students will not be permitted to make up any discussion forum posts that they miss (unless the student provides documentation of extenuating circumstances).

At the end of each lesson, I will distribute a summary of the main themes covered in our discussion on the Lesson Forum.

Tips for Success

To promote a respectful atmosphere, remember to formulate suggestions to colleagues carefully, so that they will be received as constructive criticism. Also, if a suggested question has already been answered by a number of your colleagues, you should try to critique or build upon a colleague's postings by considering the following:

- Has your colleague's response covered all the main points, or is there something that you could add?
- Is part of the post confusing, and do you have questions about what it might mean?
- Do you have a suggestion about how the point might have been expressed more clearly?

Reading and critiquing one another's work is a useful learning tool, so I encourage you to get into the habit of responding to one another.

Finally, you should be able to answer all of the questions suggested for the discussion forum, regardless of which ones you choose to answer. All of the questions are fair game for the final exam.

Papers

You will write two papers for this course. Instructions will appear in the Assignments section of Sakai two weeks before each paper's due date. Paper deadlines are noted on the Schedule page. The paper assignments will ask you to perform two different but related tasks.

- **Expository task:** The expository task is explaining what someone else says, reconstructing that person's argument as accurately, thoroughly, and concisely as you can. Effective exposition requires being able to identify the author's conclusion and the reasons given in support of that conclusion. The better you are at reading critically, the easier this expository task will be. The better you are at looking for and identifying arguments and conclusions while reading, the easier it will be to write out a reconstruction of an argument and its conclusion.
- **Critical task:** The critical task is critically assessing the view or objection you have just explained in the expository task. In defending your assessment, you will need to identify features that make the author's view convincing or unconvincing. To complete this critical task well, you will have to present and respond to at least one objection someone else could present to your way of thinking.

I prefer that you do not reference readings outside of those assigned in this class in your papers. And you must cite the sources of all ideas, quotes, and paraphrases that are not your own. The Writing

Center has a useful handout on completing philosophy writing assignments that you should review before beginning your paper.

Though you can use the Open Discussion Forum to discuss the theories you plan to use in your paper and/or the arguments that you plan to give in defense of your own position, the paper you submit must contain only your own work. The Honor Code will be strictly enforced, and you will be required to pledge that you have neither given nor received unauthorized aid.

I am also happy to set up a time to meet with you via Skype or over the phone to discuss an outline of your paper.

Paper Requirements

- **Outline:** At least one week before each paper is due, you must submit a short outline of your paper (no more than one page). If you do not submit an outline, I will deduct ten percentage points from your paper grade. I will return your outlines with comments no fewer than five days before the paper is due.
- **Length:** Your papers must be between 1,000 and 1,250 words. This is the equivalent of three to four double-spaced pages in 12-point type. I will strictly enforce this maximum. It is in place to help you focus your discussion, explain your points thoroughly but concisely, and avoid the temptation to discuss tangential issues.
- **Submission:** Submit your papers by uploading them in the Assignments section of Sakai. See the Submitting Assignments section below for more information.
- **Late Work:** Late papers will not be accepted for credit unless you have a serious problem that has been documented (such as by a doctor's note). If you anticipate needing an extension on one of the paper assignments, you must contact me via email at least twenty-four hours prior to the due date to ask for an extension.
- **Anonymity:** So that I can grade "blindly," do not include your name anywhere in the filename or in the body of your paper. However, you must include your PID in the filename and in the main text of your paper. Instructions regarding how to format your submission will be included with each paper assignment.
- **Citing Sources:** You should cite sources you use in your papers in a way that clearly identifies the source. You can use any system of citation and/or bibliography you like (MLA, APA, Chicago, and so on), as long as you use one style consistently throughout the paper.
- **Rewrites:** You will be given the opportunity to rewrite each of your papers based on the feedback I provide while grading them. The due dates for each paper rewrite are included in the Schedule. Rewrites should be submitted by uploading them in the Assignments and Final section in Sakai. If you decide to rewrite a paper, your paper grade will be calculated by averaging your original paper grade and the grade you earn on the rewrite. So if your original grade on Paper 1 was 80 percent and you earn a 90 percent on your Paper 1 Rewrite, then your Paper 1 grade would be 85 percent.

Grading Rubric for Papers 1 and 2

I will evaluate your papers based on the rubric below.

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Task	Weight
Reconstruct the target argument: Does your paper explain each premise of the argument, define technical or controversial terms employed in the argument, and explain how each premise works together to establish the conclusion?	15 percent
Clearly articulate an evaluative stance: Does your paper clearly state whether you think that target argument is sound? If you think the argument is unsound, does your paper state which premise(s) you think is(are) false or where the reasoning goes wrong?	20 percent
Convincingly and thoroughly defend this evaluative stance: Does your paper provide the reader with good reasons for thinking that your assessment of the argument is right? To receive credit for this portion of the assignment, it is not enough for your paper to merely explain your position and detail the way it differs from opposing views. Your paper must also explain why your position has some advantage over opposing views. A paper that does not consider at least one objection to the adopted evaluative stance will not earn top marks in this category.	30 percent
In the course of defending this evaluative stance, demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of relevant material from the course readings: Do you show that you fully understand the various (relevant) philosophical positions that we have studied in the course? Does your writing demonstrate that you have thought deeply and critically about the relevant material from the readings?	20 percent
Craft prose that clearly communicates ideas: Is your paper organized effectively? Do your sentences express your thoughts clearly and are they structured so that they are easy to understand? Does your writing style makes the reasoning or way of thinking transparent to the reader?	15 percent

Final Exam

The cumulative final exam will require you to write one short essay (between 300 and 400 words) in response to a prompt that you will select from a bank of three prompts. The final exam essay prompts will be modeled on the discussion forum prompts.

The exam will be available in the Quizzes and Exams section of the Sakai site on the dates listed on the Schedule page. You may complete the final exam at any point during those dates, but once you begin the exam you will have three hours to submit your essay. If you fail to submit your exam response within three hours of opening the exam, you will not receive credit for the final exam.

I **strongly** recommend that you compose your exam responses in Microsoft Word (or another word processing program) and copy and paste them into Sakai. You should also save your work frequently.

You must take the final exam alone. The final exam will be **open book** and **open notes**, but you are not permitted to seek any outside assistance apart from these sources while completing the exam. All your responses must be given in your own words. You may not quote from any source. You may not cut and paste from any sources, including your own papers or discussion forum posts. The Honor Code will be strictly enforced, and you will be required to pledge that you have neither given nor received unauthorized aid.

No late exams will be accepted. Anyone who does not submit exam responses will not be able to complete the course this term.

Submitting Assignments

Make sure to complete the steps below when you're ready to submit your papers or final exam.

1. Keep backup copies of each assignment.
 2. Pledge the Honor Code for each graded assignment (“I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid, in accordance with the Honor Code, on this assignment”). The Honor Code will be strictly enforced for all exams and papers.
 3. Cite every *idea* that is not your own, as well as any quoted or paraphrased passages.
 4. Submit all assignments as instructed through Sakai.
 5. If technical difficulties prevent your exam or paper from reaching me in a legible form, you must let me know immediately and attempt to resend your assignment electronically—either by uploading it to Sakai or sending it to me as an email attachment.
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Grading

Final grades in this course will be calculated as shown below:

Assignment	Weight
Role A Discussion Posts (5 total)	20 percent
Paper 1	30 percent
Paper 2	30 percent
Final Exam	10 percent
Participation (Lessons 1 & 12 posts, 10 Role B posts, and Reading Quizzes)	10 percent

Grading is a matter of comparing and ranking student work. When I grade your assignments, I am comparing your work to that of other students in this class but also in past classes. The comparative nature of grading means that it is important for students to have the same assignments and opportunities. Occasionally, a student will ask to do extra work in order to raise a grade, but in fairness to other students, I must refuse such requests. The same considerations motivate my policy about paper drafts: Since I won't be reading and commenting on drafts from every student, I will not read drafts at all.

Like most instructors I know, I do not approach an assignment with the idea that it starts with an A, and then loses points for errors. If anything, I approach the assignment initially as if it is average work, which then receives a higher or lower grade according to whether it indicates more or less understanding and skill than average. When you remember that grading is comparative, it can help you to understand why, for example, an exam or paper response that makes no obvious errors may not earn top marks. Other students may have written responses that demonstrated greater depth of understanding, were better organized, or easier for a reader to follow.

The grade given for any particular assignment reflects only the quality of that assignment. This is why I will, whenever possible, grade “blindly.” It is not a personal judgment either of you or your abilities. I am aware that some of you may be facing difficulties or juggling many responsibilities, and I will not be offended if philosophy is not your first priority. Nevertheless, it would be unethical for

me to base anyone's grade upon effort or independent reasons for needing a high grade, for example. The grade a student earns on any given assignment will be determined exclusively by the quality of the work submitted.

Your work in this course is graded on a standard 10-point scale as outlined below. See the Registrar's explanation of the grading system for more detailed information about the grading scale.

A	94-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	F	below 60
A-	90-93	B	84-86	C	74-76	D	60-66		
		B-	80-83	C-	70-73				

I employ "blind grading" for all papers. I ask you to assist me in this by including only your PID (and not your name) on your paper. (Your PID is included in your confirmation letter. If you do not have your confirmation letter, you can find your PID here.)

You can estimate your own grade at any point during the term based on the grades you have received to that point. Your grades will be posted in the gradebook.

If you believe that a grade you received does not accurately reflect the quality of the work, you may contact me with this concern. In doing so, please be prepared to explain your reasons. Be aware that when you contest a grade, I will reassess the assignment from scratch, which means that the grade could be either raised or lowered.

Points of Advice

Since this is a three-credit course, you should spend a minimum of nine hours on the lesson each week. You may need to spend more than that on the first few lessons, since you will be faced with ideas and expectations that may be unfamiliar. Once you start to accumulate a stock of concepts and tools, you will become more efficient in your reading and writing. Throughout the course, though, you should expect to read each assignment several times, and outline or summarize each reading.

On the Reading Guidelines page, I suggest a general strategy for approaching the readings. As you progress through the course, you probably will begin to follow my suggestions more naturally. In the beginning though, you should use these steps to guide your reading.

The better you become at seeing the big picture, the more you'll enjoy grappling with the questions and assignments. Don't focus on trying to understand every detail. Focus on learning to figure out what the bottom line of the author's view is, on seeing the basic differences among the various responses to a question, and on understanding the arguments that the authors we read offer in defense of their positions.

Be sure that your discussion forum posts and your papers *specifically answer the questions posed to you in the assignment* (rather than simply addressing related topics). This might seem obvious, but it's surprisingly easy to forget.

Academic Policies

By enrolling as a student in this course, you agree to abide by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill policies related to the acceptable use of online resources. Please consult the Acceptable Use Policy on topics such as copyright, net-etiquette, and privacy protection.

As part of this course, you may be asked to participate in online discussions or other online activities that may include personal information about you or other students in the course. Please be respectful of the rights and protection of other participants under the UNC-Chapel Hill Information Security Policies when participating in online classes.

When using online resources offered by organizations not affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill, such as Google or YouTube, please note that the terms and conditions of these companies and not the University's Terms and Conditions apply. These third parties may offer different degrees of privacy protection and access rights to online content. You should be well aware of this when posting content to sites not managed by UNC-Chapel Hill.

When links to sites outside of the unc.edu domain are inserted in class discussions, please be mindful that clicking on sites not affiliated with UNC-Chapel Hill may pose a risk for your computer due to the possible presence of malware on such sites.

Honor Code

As a UNC student, you are expected to uphold the University's Honor Code. All work that you produce must be your own! Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated in this course. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, or how to properly cite a source, please contact me. Please view this brief Plagiarism Tutorial created by the librarians of UNC-Chapel Hill, Duke University, NC State University, and NC Central University.

Lessons

Lesson Topics
Lesson 1: Introduction to the Course
Lesson 2: Free Will: The Argument for Hard Determinism
Lesson 3: Free Will: The Argument Against Compatibilism
Lesson 4: Free Will: The Argument Against Libertarianism
Lesson 5: Mind and Body: Descartes' Conceivability Argument for Dualism
Lesson 6: Mind and Body: Nagel's Bat Argument Against Mind-Body Identity
Lesson 7: Mind and Body: Block's Argument Against Functionalism
Lesson 8: Mind and Body: Searle's Chinese Room Argument Against Strong AI
Lesson 9: Knowledge and Skepticism: Descartes' Dream and Evil Genius Arguments
Lesson 10: Knowledge and Skepticism: Arguments Against Skepticism
Lesson 11: Knowledge and Skepticism: Hume's Argument Against Induction

Lesson 12: Wrap-up and Review

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Send comments and questions to fridaycenter@unc.edu.