

## **PHI 2010 Introduction to Philosophy Fall 2017**

“He chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that. You see, I trusted. I trusted in his lordship's wisdom. All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really - one has to ask oneself - what dignity is there in that?” (From *The Remains of the Day*, by Kazuo Ishiguro).

**Class Time:** Monday and Wednesday, 4.00-5:15

**Instructor:** Dr. Benjamin Murphy, bmurphy@fsu.edu, 317-0367 ext. 230

**Web-site:** <http://myweb.fsu.edu/bmurphy/>

**Office Hours:** Mon and Wed, 2:30-4:00. Tues and Thurs 4:00-5:00

**Prerequisites:** None. The course is suitable for all students, from the first semester of university study onwards.

### **Course Description:**

This course introduces some of the central problems in philosophy. Students also learn how to construct and criticize arguments, and develop their own philosophical positions.

The course make you think about how to think and in particular, to think about how to think about values, focusing on problems such as the self, free will, equality and utilitarianism. If this class is successful, you will at least be able to say that you made your own mistakes in life.

### **Course Objectives:**

If this class is truly successful, then you will at least be able to say that you made your own mistakes in life. However, if anyone is able to stand in judgement over you, it will certainly not be I. So, here are some abilities that I can and will measure in order to assign you a grade.

- Whatever you say, say it clearly.
- Compare different philosophical theories, probing their strengths and weaknesses.
- Explain the importance of historical context in understanding and evaluating ethical positions.
- Analyze and evaluate philosophical arguments step by step, identifying points of contention.
- Evaluate various ethical positions.
- Describe the ways in which historical, social, or cultural contexts shape ethical perspectives.
- Anticipate the price that must be paid for virtue

These will be evaluated through in-class writing, your term paper and discussions. There are also regular quizzes, whose purpose is simply to make sure that you all keep up with the reading.

## **Grading:**

94+ A  
90+ A-  
86+ B+  
82+ B  
78+ B-  
74+ C+  
70+ C  
66+ C-  
64+ D+  
60+ D  
56+ D-

So, you want an A? Here's what you need to do:

Term Paper:	40%
Discussion:	20%
Quizzes (best 5 of 7):	10%
In-class writing (10% for each of the 3):	30%

70% of the grade depends upon written work, so it is impossible to get a grade of C- for the class without getting at least C- for the written work (in-class writing and term-paper). That is why you get a W on your transcript if you pass the class.

## **Term Paper:**

The title of your term paper is: *In your opinion, can we ever make value judgments that are objectively true?*  
Length: 4000 words.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> October, you will each have the chance to make a brief presentation outlining your thoughts on the matter up until that point in the semester. You will be graded not so much for your own presentations, as for your comments on the presentations of your class-mates (this will be the biggest factor in setting the grade for discussion. Helpful comments help improve a paper). On the 9<sup>th</sup> October, you will submit a rough draft. ***If you do not submit a rough draft by that date, you will lose 5% of your final grade.*** (If your rough draft is really bad, your grade will not suffer, but if you don't submit anything, you will pay the price. So just make sure you have something to hand in!) In your rough draft, please include thanks for the most helpful comments you received during the discussion. I will return these drafts with comments and suggestions by the 11<sup>th</sup> October, including my estimate of whether the rough draft would receive a passing grade (A-C) or a failing grade (D-F). This is so that you can then make a decision about whether to continue with the class by the 13<sup>th</sup> October, which is the last day to drop without special permission. Please note that since this does not give me much time to read the rough drafts. I will make sure you receive some information about points that could be improved, but *do not assume that because I make no comment about a particular part of the paper, it therefore needs no improvement, my comments are just the starting point for further work.* My goal in commenting on the rough drafts is to point out the priorities – I cannot necessarily tell you all of the problems you need to fix, but I will give you an idea of the biggest problems.

Expression: marked out of 10.

A good paper must be clearly expressed. The English must be flawless, and you should not try to impress me by using words that you do not fully understand. The tone should be that of a formal, academic piece of writing.

Organization: marked out of 10.

Do not waste a single word with irrelevant personal anecdotes, irrelevant information about the lives of great philosophers, jokes, or pretentious opening statements like “Since the start of time...” The paper should be well structured, like a well-written episode of a television series – when I get to the end, it must be clear that every single paragraph was essential, and that I was being directed all along to what appears to be an inevitable outcome. (When you are revising your first draft, think very carefully about how the material might be re-arranged).

Understanding: marked out of 10.

You will need to give some examples of judgements that we would clearly consider to be objective, for example that judgement that the Earth moves around the Sun, and judgements that we clearly consider to be value judgements, for example the judgement that Hitler was evil. (But please, try to think of your own examples). Then you will need to consider carefully what reasons there are for supposing that we cannot arrive at objective opinions on matters of value. Are these obstacles that could be overcome with hard work, or insuperable barriers? Think very carefully about how someone might respond to your arguments, bearing in mind what other philosophers have said about such matters. Feel free to make use of points that were discussed in class as well, but always look for added value – add something of your own to the discussion. If your friend said something useful in class, you can mention it, but try to take the debate a step further. If you quote a well-known philosopher, explain whether you agree or disagree, and why. You must show that you have made an attempt to engage with people whose opinions you disagree with. It is important that you demonstrate an appreciation that, whatever you say on this topic, you are disagreeing with some of the most intelligent people who have ever lived.

Argumentation: marked out of 10.

The goal is to present your thinking on the matter. So, the whole paper must be defending your point of view – do not wait until the final paragraph to mention which side you happen to agree with, state and defend your position from the start. But remember, you are presenting not just your opinion on the matter, but your thinking – there must be some attempt at argument. Throughout the class, I will be trying to teach you techniques of argument as we evaluate the work of other philosophers. The most important feature of a good argument is that you need to find a way to use points of consensus to settle points of controversy. For example, which is the greatest soccer club in English history, Liverpool or Manchester United. That is a point of controversy. Manchester United have won the English top-flight championship (formerly known as Division One, now known as the Premiership) more than any other club. That is a point of consensus that nobody can deny, and evidence in favor of their being the best. But then Liverpool have won the top European trophy (formerly the European Cup, now the Champions’ League) more than any other club. That too is a point of consensus, and evidence in favor of Liverpool. So now we need to know which trophy matters more – a controversial question. Liverpool have won five European cups and eighteen English league titles, United have won twenty English titles and three European cups – point of consensus. Those figures suggest that the European trophy is harder to win, and therefore is a better indication of greatness. If the European Cup is the greater trophy, then we have evidence that Liverpool is the greatest club. Notice how finding the right questions at each stage leads us step by step to an answer to the original question – we use facts about which there is a consensus to get an answer to a controversial question. (I hate admitting that Liverpool have been more successful, but good arguments force people to admit that something is true even if it is not what we want to believe).

### In-Class Writing:

For the in-class writing assignments, you are welcome to use your copies of the text-book, and to bring along other reading materials that we may have used, and these may contain your annotations. (If you underline sections, or add notes by hand, for example defining unfamiliar words or reminding yourself of useful objections, those are annotations). You may also bring a dictionary of your choice. However, you may not communicate during the in-text writing session, and you may not access the internet. I will give you a prompt, based on the material that we have been discussing, and you will write an essay. Although I will not expect the same standard as in the term paper, I will be looking for the same qualities – expression, organization, understanding and argumentation. In the prompt, I will also explain what skills you are expected to demonstrate in this particular piece of writing, based on the class objectives.

### Quizzes:

Quizzes are there to make sure you keep up with the reading. No books or notes are allowed during quizzes, which will consist of brief multiple choice questions based on everything that we have read since the previous quiz, and everything that I have said during class. If you miss a class, please check with your classmates to find out what you have missed.

The best five out of seven quizzes will be used to determine the final grade. If you miss a quiz, even for a documented absence, it will become one of the two quiz grades that you drop.

My assumption is that you would never miss a quiz except for a really good reason, and even for good reasons, you would not miss more than two quizzes.

Text Book:

*Reading Philosophy: Selected Texts With A Method For Beginners*, by Samuel Guttenplan, Jennifer Hornsby, Christopher Janaway, (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003).

There will be readings from other sources, usually available using FSU's extensive digital library.

Provisional Schedule:

In-class writing dates are important – you can only make up for a missed in-class writing assignment if you have a very good reason, e.g. documented illness, death in the family or other documented crisis, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, or other official University activity.

6<sup>th</sup> September: Quiz 1

20<sup>th</sup> September: Quiz 2

**27<sup>th</sup> September: In-Class Writing 1**

2<sup>nd</sup> October: First Set of Presentations

4<sup>th</sup> October: Second Set of Presentations

9<sup>th</sup> October: Rough Drafts Submitted

11<sup>th</sup> October: Rough Drafts Returned

13<sup>th</sup> ***October: Last day to drop without special permission***

16<sup>th</sup> October

25<sup>th</sup> October: Quiz 4

**1<sup>st</sup> November: In-Class Writing 2**

8<sup>th</sup> November: Quiz 5

15<sup>th</sup> November: Quiz 6

27<sup>th</sup> November: Quiz 7

6<sup>th</sup> December: **Final Draft of Term-Paper Due.**

11<sup>th</sup> \_ 15<sup>th</sup> December: Final Exam Week, including **In-Class Writing 3** (Exact date to be announced).

**Students With Disabilities:**

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodation should: (1) register with and provide documentation to the Student Disability Resource Center; and (2) bring a letter to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type. This should be done during the first week of class. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities, contact the: Student Disability Resource Center 874 Traditions Way 108 Student Services Building Florida State University Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167 (850) 644-9566 (voice) (850) 644-8504 (TDD) [sdrc@admin.fsu.edu](mailto:sdrc@admin.fsu.edu)

<http://www.disabilitycenter.fsu.edu/>

### Sexual Harassment Policy:

It is the policy of the University that its employees and students neither commit nor condone sexual harassment in any form.

[http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/grad/info/university\\_notices.htm](http://registrar.fsu.edu/bulletin/grad/info/university_notices.htm)

### Student eligibility for an incomplete grade:

Incomplete (“I”) grades will not be assigned, except in the case of exceptional unforeseen circumstances that occur within the last three weeks of the semester and your work has otherwise been satisfactory (C average).

**Policies:** So, you want to receive an F? Just ignore the following rules.

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

I allow 6 excused absences. I assume that all absences are excused – I will not ask to see any documentation: if you miss a class or arrive late, I assume it is for a good reason and ask for no explanation. If you miss 7-9 classes, for whatever reason, you will lose 5% of your grade. If you have compelling reasons for missing more than one third of the course, then you should drop the class: if you miss 10 or more classes, you will automatically fail.

At the start of the class, I will close the door and then call roll. If you arrive when the door is closed, please wait patiently and quietly. Do not disturb the class. After one hour, I will open the door, giving a chance for latecomers to enter and early-leavers to depart – in each case, receiving a half-credit for attendance.

Clocks on this campus are unreliable: I set my watch by the computer in my office – this is the same time as is displayed on computers in classrooms and in the library. (Administrative computers, e.g. in the Student Affairs Office are on a different server, although the time-difference is only a few seconds.)

Remember, you should always aim to be the classroom before the lesson begins. By the time I call roll, you should be sat at your desk waiting.

Cell phones must be switched off in class. You will be penalized for breaking this rule. Food is prohibited, but you may quietly imbibe non-alcoholic drinks.

**Late Work:** Work must be handed in during class on the date given. If you know that you will be unable to make a class, you may arrange for a friend to deliver the work to me, but the responsibility is yours. I will only consider grading late work in exceptional cases (e.g. serious illness, with a doctor’s note). If I consider it appropriate, I will penalize late work. Unless you have a very good reason for presenting the work late, it will receive an F.

**Highlights/Lowlights:** To help all students in the class produce better papers, I intend to select the best and worst pieces of work that are submitted on the web-site along with my comments. These extracts will be presented anonymously. Please indicate on every paper you submit whether you are willing for parts of it to be used in this way. “Y” indicates “Yes”, “N” indicates “No”. This applies to the rough draft and to the in-class assignments.

## **THERE IS A FATE WORSE THAN F!**

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “...be honest and truthful and...[to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” (Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://dof.fsu.edu/honorpolicy.htm>.)

If you deliberately violate the Academic Honor Code, you are trying to get more credit for your work than you deserve by deceiving your instructor. I do not tell my students lies, and it makes me angry when students try to deceive me. Furthermore, you are attempting to gain an unfair advantage over honest students. Taking steps to deal with plagiarism takes up a lot of my time, and slows down the whole process of grading. So, please read the following instructions and follow them carefully.

If you are using *any* words taken directly from any book, or web-site, or CD-ROM, they must be enclosed in inverted commas - "...", or else clearly indicated by an indented margin and change of format:

As with this piece of text, which clearly stands apart from the rest of this paragraph. This is how a quotation from another source should appear in your paper when printed, unless it is just a "couple of words" that you want to mention.

You must state from which book they were taken, preferably including a page number. The reference must be given in the text, when the quotation is used, so that I can see when grading your paper exactly what is your work and what is taken from another source. Use either footnotes<sup>1</sup>, or (parentheses). It is *not* sufficient to list sources at the end of the paper, although you should also do this.

If you are using ideas or information taken from a book, a web-site, a lecture or a conversation with a friend, acknowledgement must be given in the text, at the point in which the idea or information is used.

Even if you are not quoting directly, there should still be a clear acknowledgement of your sources: this is known as paraphrasing – you explain someone else's ideas in your own words. By giving a footnote, you give credit to the person whose information you are using. You also advertise to the professor that you have been reading about the subject.

If you have any doubts about meeting these requirements, contact me as soon as possible. Further notes are available on my web-site.

Papers must be written by you in English. If you write it in Spanish, you must translate it yourself: you are being graded, in part on your ability to communicate effectively in English. You are allowed to have help with "proof-reading" - i.e. you may ask someone to read what you have written in English and point out any mistakes. You must acknowledge your gratitude to your proof-reader at the start of the paper.

Plagiarism also includes the use of illicit material in closed book quizzes and final examinations. If I discover that you are guilty of plagiarism, you will receive an F for the piece of work in question, and it will be counted towards your final grade. As required by the General Bulletin, I will inform the Vice-Rector in writing, and this will remain on your file. Repeated offenses may result in your being expelled from the university. If I discover a second offence, you will receive an F for the entire course. If you are charged with plagiarism, you cannot drop the class.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a footnote. It would state the exact source of the quotation. If you are using Word, you can Insert footnotes and they will automatically be numbered. Footnotes are numbered consecutively throughout the paper. If you refer twice to the same book, you do not repeat the same number.

I have read and understood the syllabus for PHI 2010, Fall 2017. If I fail to follow the instructions given here, particularly those which relate to violations of the Academic Honor Code, I accept responsibility.

Signed:

Name (print):