

Philosophy *for living*

PHIL 1301



Professor Benjamin Rider

Office: Irby 118F

Office Hours: MWF 11-12, 3-4, T 10:30-1:30, and by appointment

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Course Website: Blackboard, accessible through the Courses tab on MyUCA.

Description: Philosophy is the use of the tools of reason in the attempt to address some of the most difficult and persistent questions about the universe and human life.

This course will focus on philosophy *of* and *for* living, with the central question: What makes a human life good, meaningful, and happy? In exploring this question, we'll delve into a wide variety of related philosophical questions: What makes a good leader? What does it take to live well together in society? What is it to be human, and what is our place in the universe? How should a person deal with suffering? How should we think about death? We will read and discuss ancient and modern responses to these questions.

Course objectives: This course satisfies the Core humanities requirement in the area of Critical Inquiry. As such, my purpose in the course is not only to introduce you to the kinds of critical inquiry practiced in the discipline of philosophy, but also to offer a sample of the ways thoughtful people in different times and cultures have approached basic questions of human existence. As we discuss these deep questions, we'll have three main objectives:

- 1) To explore the thinking of some of the great philosophers of human history and understand the problems they considered and the ideas and arguments they developed in response to those problems.
- 2) To develop skills in reading and analyzing texts, evaluating arguments, and discussing and writing about philosophical topics.
- 3) To examine your own beliefs critically, and to develop your own responses to these questions.

The third objective is crucial for me. My view is that philosophy, at its most basic level, is not about learning what some old dead guys said. Rather, it is a **process of examining your own life, thoughts, and beliefs, and developing a better understanding of yourself and how you think about the world.**

First Year Seminar

Your section of Philosophy for Living is designated as a First Year Seminar. What does that mean?

The First Year Seminar is a part of the UCA Core Program. According to the University, “The purpose of the first-year seminar is to provide a small-class learning environment to facilitate engagement in academic study at the collegiate level, make a connection to the university, and reinforce the importance of written communication skills.” In other words, it’s a small class (in our case, about 25 students) that’s designed to help you get used to college, to meet people, and **to start to develop the skills you will need to be successful both at UCA and after you graduate.**

Participating professors volunteered in the hopes of creating an engaging and valuable experience for new students of the University.

A First Year Seminar has four distinctive features:

- Smaller class sizes, more discussion: It is small enough to be a *seminar* rather than a lecture! You can get to know your professor and fellow students better than in a larger class.
- Collaborative projects and group work: All FYS courses must contain some significant group project, in which students work together to divide tasks and achieve some goal.
- A significant writing component: Learning to communicate your ideas clearly and concisely is one of the most important things that you learn in college.
- Introduction to the UCA Core program: In order to help you understand the UCA Core and how broad course requirements fit into your college experience.

Note that this is *not* a normal course! It will require more from you, and from me as well, to create an experience that will be of value to you in your future college career. So be prepared to work!

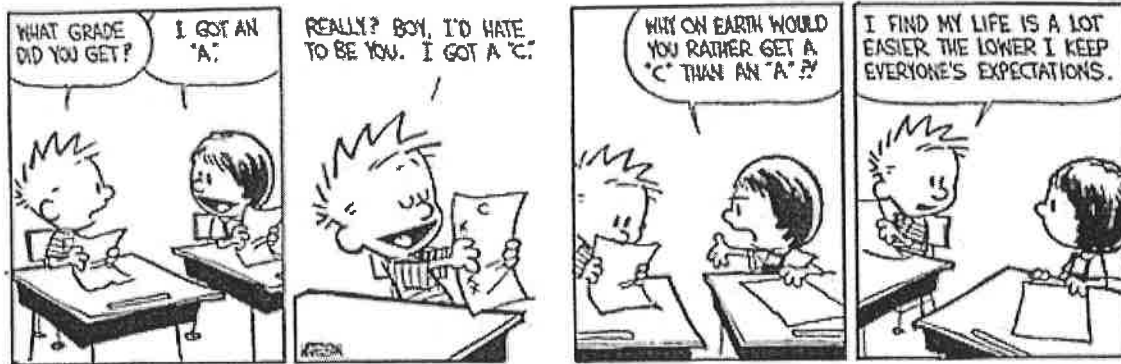
Primary texts

- ✓ Plato, *The Trials of Socrates* (Hackett)
- ✓ Plato, *Meno and Other Dialogues* (Oxford University Press)
- ✓ Confucius, *The Essential Analects* (Hackett)
- ✓ Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching* (Hackett)
- ✓ Rene Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy* (Hackett)



Please purchase all texts at the campus bookstore, Textbook Brokers, or another suitable source. **These are not optional—you must purchase and read the books to succeed in the course!** Besides these texts, additional reading assignments will be posted on the Blackboard website for the class, as indicated in the schedule.

Course assignments and grading



The grading for this course works on a points-based system. There is a total of 400 points available to earn by completing a variety of assignments, including tests, homework, and writing assignments. The assignments are described below:

- Daily reflection questions (for class preparation): Since our class meetings will focus mainly on discussion, it is very important that everyone come to class having read and thought about the day's reading assignment. The daily reflection questions, *which will be due every day when there is not a test or writing assignment due*, ask you to reflect on what you've read and to prepare some ideas for the class discussion. See instructions in the **Daily Reflection Questions** handout. This grade component will also include any other homework or in class assignments that we do. (60 points)
- Class participation and attendance: In a philosophy class, regular participation and active discussion are crucial! A large part of the value of philosophy is getting the chance to express and develop your own ideas, to ask questions, and to hear what other students have to say. As a result, I include class participation as a component of your grade. (45 points)

See the **Guidelines for Class Participation** (which I will distribute soon) for more details on what I'll be looking for in assigning these grades.

- Two writing assignments (3-5 pages each): Writing assignments provide a forum for you to respond creatively to the class and to apply the ideas we discuss to your own life and experiences. (50 points each, 100 points total)
- Tests and quizzes: Rather than having a couple of big tests that count for a big percentage of your grade, we will have quizzes on the material about every three weeks. This approach is meant to encourage you to study and learn the material *as we go*, rather than cramming for a big exam and then forgetting it all afterwards. Each quiz is worth 20 points. Then, on October 26, there will be a midterm exam, covering everything we have discussed up to that point. Finally, we will have a Final Exam (65 points), but (a) it will specifically cover material from the quizzes and the midterm and (b) you will not have to take it **if your quiz and exam score at that point is higher than 90%**.
- Group presentation: A collaborative group presentation, in class during the last part of the semester. Details will be distributed when the time comes. (40 points)

Grading breakdown

<i>Component</i>	<i>Points</i>
Daily reflection questions and homework	60
Participation and attendance	45
Writing assignments (two, 50 points each)	100 total
Quizzes (3 quizzes, 20 points each)	60 total
Midterm	30
Final exam	65
Group presentation	40
<hr/> Total	<hr/> 400

There will be no curve, and all grade boundaries are strictly enforced. (E.g., 89.5% is a B, not an A.)

Other course policies

Attendance: Attendance is mandatory. I will take attendance daily. **If you must miss class for any reason, let me know through email.** I do not even need to know the specific reason; just keep me informed. You are allowed two unexcused absences without penalty, but for every unexcused absence after that, **three points will be deducted from your final grade.** I will *not* drop you for non-attendance, and while I will try to warn you about excessive absences, it is *your responsibility* to keep up with the class.

In addition, I expect everyone to be on time and ready to go at the beginning of the class period. I will not say anything, but **each time you arrive late will be recorded as ½ of an unexcused absence.**

Late work policy: Reflection Questions will not be accepted late. However, you may make up a quiz or the midterm, if you have a university approved reason for missing the class meeting in which the quiz was originally given (that is, illness, family emergency, etc.). I will also accept the writing assignments after the due date, but a 3 point penalty will be applied for each weekday that the essay is late (the first penalty is applied as soon as the deadline has past).

Class conduct: Please, at all times, show respect to your teacher and classmates. We are here to learn, so any activities (talking, text messaging, surfing the Internet, etc.) that disrupt the class environment are prohibited. In short: Put all cell phones and other devices away during class! If you do not show proper respect, you may be asked to leave.

UCA's Academic Integrity Policy: The University of Central Arkansas affirms its commitment to academic integrity and expects all members of the university community to accept shared responsibility for maintaining academic integrity. Students in this course are subject to the provisions of the university's Academic Integrity Policy, approved by the Board of Trustees as Board Policy No. 709 on February 10, 2010, and published in the *Student Handbook*. Penalties for academic misconduct in this course may include a failing grade on an assignment, a failing grade in the course, or any other course-related sanction the instructor determines to be appropriate. Continued enrollment in this course affirms a student's acceptance of this university policy.*

My Academic Integrity Policy: Plagiarism occurs when you take language or ideas from another source (another student, a book, a webpage, etc.) without properly citing or crediting the source—essentially, you are (intentionally or not) claiming someone else's work as your own. It includes more than just copying a source word for word—it is plagiarism even if you change the wording! The key is this: **All sources that you use in writing or researching your papers should be properly cited and credited, even if you paraphrase.** If I suspect your work has been plagiarized, I will take the following measures: The first offense will result in your receiving **zero credit** on that assignment, with no possibility of making up the grade. A second offense, depending on circumstances, will result in failing the class. All appeals of my decisions may be taken up with the Chair of the Philosophy and Religion Department, Dr. Charles Harvey.

Schedule of readings and topics (subject to change)

Date	Topic	Reading Assignment
8/21	Introduction	
<u>Part I: Greek and Roman Philosophy</u>		
8/24	Socrates's defense of the examined life	<i>Apology of Socrates</i> (from <i>Trials of Socrates</i> , 26-61)
8/26	A citizen's duty?	<i>Crito</i> (<i>Trials</i> 62-78)
8/28	Martin Luther King, Jr. and civil disobedience	Selections from "Letter from Birmingham Jail" (online)
8/31	What is courage?	Plato, <i>Laches</i> , pages 50-66 (from <i>Meno and Other Dialogues</i>)
9/2	Friendship	Plato, <i>Lysis</i> , pages 79-96 (from <i>Meno</i>)
9/4	Friendship, continued	Review <i>Lysis</i> selections
9/7	LABOR DAY: NO CLASS	
9/9	Happiness and pleasure	Begin Plato, <i>Gorgias</i> selections (online)
9/11	Happiness, continued	Finish <i>Gorgias</i> selections
9/14	QUIZ #1 ; introduction to Stoicism after the Quiz is over.	
9/16	<u>Stoicism</u> : Rationality and emotion	Selections online
9/18	Epictetus' psychotherapy	<i>Handbook</i> , passages 1-23 (online)
9/21	Epictetus' Stoic advice	Finish <i>Handbook</i> (online)
<u>Part II: Chinese Philosophy</u>		
9/23	Confucianism: Filial piety as the root of Goodness	<i>Analects</i> Books 1-4
9/25	Confucius and ritual: What is ritual and why is it important?	<i>Analects</i> 5-10 <i>Writing assignment #1 due on Blackboard, by 4:00 pm Friday, September 25</i>
9/28	Teaching and learning in Confucius	<i>Analects</i> 11-14
9/30	Leadership in Confucius	<i>Analects</i> 15-20
10/2	Questions and comments from students on Confucius	Review <i>Analects</i>
10/5	QUIZ #2 ; Introduction to Laozi	<i>Tao Te Ching</i> , poems 1-2
10/7	Laozi on language and the Way	<i>Tao Te Ching</i> poems 1-5
10/9	Images of the Dao: Knowledge, emptiness, being like water	<i>Tao Te Ching</i> 6-28
10/12	Control and weapons	<i>Tao Te Ching</i> 29-45
10/14	Other themes in Laozi	<i>Tao Te Ching</i> 46-69
10/16	Finishing Laozi <i>Introducing Creative Presentation assignment</i>	Finish <i>Tao Te Ching</i>
10/19	Mengzi and Xunzi on human nature	Selections online
10/21	Discussion of the UCA Core	Assignment distributed in class
10/23	FALL BREAK: NO CLASS	

10/26 MIDTERM EXAM

Part III: Philosophy, Science, and the Human Self

10/28	Skepticism as a way of life	Skepticism selections (online)
10/30	Rene Descartes' philosophical project	<i>Meditation 1</i>
11/2	An indubitable truth? Descartes' <i>cogito</i> argument	<i>Meditation 2</i>
11/4	Descartes' argument for the existence of God	<i>Meditation 3</i>
11/6	In class group meetings: Planning presentations <i>Writing assignment #2 due on Blackboard, by 4:00 pm Friday, November 6</i>	No reading
11/9	Descartes' solution: Two realms	<i>Meditation 6</i>
11/11	The problem of free will: Do we act freely when we act?	Schick and Vaughn [SV] Intro (online)
11/13	Free will is an illusion: Hard Determinism	SV Sect. 3.1 (online)
11/16	Free will is compatible with necessity: Compatibilism <i>Second creative response essay due November 20</i>	SV Sect. 3.2 (online)
11/18	Free will is self-determination: Libertarianism	SV Sect. 3.3 (online)
11/20	QUIZ #3	
11/23-12/2	<i>Presentations</i>	

The **FINAL EXAM** will be held during Finals week.

Other information: syllabus language required by UCA administration:

Evaluations: Student evaluations of a course and its professor are crucial in helping faculty achieve excellence in the classroom and the institution in demonstrating that students are gaining knowledge. Students may evaluate courses they are taking starting on the Monday of the twelfth week of instruction through the end of finals week by logging in to myUCA and clicking on the Evals button on the top right.

Disabilities: The University of Central Arkansas adheres to the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you need an accommodation under this Act due to a disability, please contact the UCA Office of Disability Services, 450-3135.

Emergency procedures: An Emergency Procedures Summary (EPS) for the building in which this class is held will be discussed during the first week of this course. EPS documents for most buildings on campus are available at <http://uca.edu/mysafety/bep/>. Every student should be familiar with emergency procedures for any campus building in which he/she spends time for classes or other purposes.

Title IX disclosure: If a student discloses an act of sexual harassment, discrimination, assault, or other sexual misconduct to a faculty member (as it relates to "student-on-student" or "employee-on-student"), the faculty member cannot maintain complete confidentiality and is required to report the act and may be required to reveal the names of the parties involved. Any allegations made by a student may or may not trigger an investigation. Each situation differs and the obligation to conduct an investigation will depend on those specific set of circumstances. The determination to conduct an investigation will be made by the Title IX Coordinator. For further information, please visit: <https://uca.edu/titleix>. *Disclosure of sexual misconduct by a third party who is not a student and/or employee is also required if the misconduct occurs when the third party is a participant in a university-sponsored program, event, or activity.

Other University Policies: Please familiarize yourself with the rights and responsibilities as well as the academic policies governing students and faculty in the most recent *Student Handbook*.