

**Phil 110 Section 101 T,R 12:30-1:45 (HUMB 114)**

Instructor: Dr. Ted Poston

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**Philosophy 110: Introduction to Philosophy****Overview:**

This course is intended as an introductory account of a few of the primary problems that have arisen in traditional western philosophy. Along the way, particular methods of dealing with such problems will be highlighted, with the hope that they point us in the right direction for solving said problems. There are three central divisions of the course, the first of which (Section I) is designed to provide certain conceptual tools necessary for both understanding and critically examining the philosophical problems with which we'll be dealing. Section II will be devoted to several notable arguments for the existence of God, and whether in fact they can be sustained under close scrutiny and reflection. We will also examine the problem of evil and whether facts about evil prove that there is no God. In Section III, we will discuss the branch of philosophy devoted to ethics and political philosophy. Here, our discussion will involve the difficulties and challenges posed by questions about moral principles and how we ought to live. We will begin by focusing on traditional accounts of the moral domain (consequentialism, deontology, and virtue theory). Next, we will branch out to consider political philosophy. Along the way, we will discuss pressing philosophical issues about friendship, racism, and self-interest.

**Text:**

**PBF** Perry, Bratman, and Fischer. *Introduction to Philosophy*. 2013. Oxford. 6<sup>th</sup> edition

**Course Requirements:***In General:*

Individuals who by their actions disrupt the class will be asked to leave.<sup>1</sup> Academic dishonesty on your part will suffice for failure of this course. For details on what is expected (and not expected) of you in terms of academic conduct, please see the *Student Academic Conduct Policy* authorized by the University of South Alabama at the following website: [www.usouthal.edu/academicaffairs/studentacadconduct.pdf](http://www.usouthal.edu/academicaffairs/studentacadconduct.pdf)

Note: the instructor reserves the right to modify the contents of this syllabus at any time. *Most importantly*, students are responsible for being aware of the requirements and expectations noted in this syllabus, *and* for any changes to this syllabus that might arise.

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<sup>1</sup> Disruptive academic behavior is defined as individual or group conduct that interrupts or interferes with any educational activity or environment, infringes upon the rights and privileges of others, results in or threatens the destruction of property, and/or is otherwise prejudicial to the maintenance of order in an academic environment, such as a classroom or any setting in which formal learning is taking place. Though dependent upon the size and nature of the academic setting, **disruption refers to behavior a reasonable person would view as substantially or repeatedly interfering with the conduct of an activity**. Disruptive behavior may range from the mildly annoying to clearly disruptive, dangerous and/or violent behavior which should never be tolerated. Incidents of academic disruption will be dealt with as they occur as per the policies and procedures set out in the *Lowdown, USA Policies, Academic Disruption Policies*.

Disabilities? Please notify me should you need any academic accommodation. You also need to provide certification from Disability Services (Office of Special Students Services, located in Room 270 of the Student Center – 251-460-7212).

*Attendance:*

Attendance is required. Some important guidelines: **First**, note that should you not attend regularly, your quiz and exam grades will almost certainly suffer. That is, they will suffer insofar as much of the material on which you'll be examined will come from the course lectures. So, it is in your best interest to attend class. Should you not be able to attend for some reason, it is your responsibility to recover the information missed either via your classmates or by a meeting with me during my office hours. **Second, absences will be excused so long as you inform me beforehand (i.e. a week before, a day before, an hour before,...) and your excuse for having missed class meets requirements legitimated by the instructor (i.e. illness, family emergency, etc.).** Whether an excuse is deemed legitimate will be at the discretion of the instructor. In cases of illness, written documentation from a physician may be required. **Third, being late to class will count as an absence.** **Finally**, no make-up examinations will be administered unless the instructor has been both notified in advance and some form of documentation has been provided to excuse the missing of the exam. Note: the missing of even one exam will disallow you from passing this course. See (4) below under "Grading Policy."

*Electronic devices:*

Studies indicate that laptops and cell phones negatively affect both the users themselves and also the students around them in the classroom. They disrupt the classroom atmosphere and my teaching. Hence, no laptops are allowed. No phones (and related devices) should be used; don't even have them out. Because it is disruptive to good philosophical dialogue, if I see you with your cellphone out I will count you as absent. (If you are waiting for an emergency call, let me know ahead of time, and you can excuse yourself from class for the call.)

*Grading Policy:*

(1) There will be two exams, both worth 25% of your grade. (Note: the final exam *will not* be cumulative.) Expect the exam content to be a combination of true/false, short answer and essay question(s). For each exam date, you are to bring to class with you a *small blue exam booklet*, a so-called *bluebook*.

(2) There will be five quizzes, primarily made up of multiple-choice and short-answer questions. Collectively the quizzes will be worth 25% of your final grade. **[Note: Your first quiz, importantly, will be on the contents of this very syllabus. Read it carefully, and be prepared to answer questions on its contents on the first quiz.]**

(3) Attendance and Participation will account for 25% of your final grade. You earn points each day or coming to class. I'll drop the lowest attendance score and then for each class you miss you'll lose the points for that day. The topics we discuss are engaging and I expect discussion. Participation points will be assigned on the basis of my judgment of your total contribution in the course. Merely coming to every class does not guarantee a full 25%.

(4) Weight by percentage points of each assignment:

First Exam:	25%
Final Exam:	25%
Five Quizzes:	5% each (totaling 25%)
Attend./Part.	25%

\*\*\*Note the weight assigned to each item. I emphasize this in the hope that you will take seriously my invitation to all of you to attend my office hours with questions, points of clarification, and any other confusion that might befall you. If you're unavailable during my office hours, schedule an appointment with me. I'm always here to help in any way possible.

*JagSuccess:*

JagSuccess is a program intended to help students achieve success in 100-200 level courses. If you are not doing well, you will receive an email instructing you to see your professor along with instructions to access an online tutorial intended to help with common problems affecting academic performance. Watch for this email during week 8 of this semester.

### **Course Schedule:**

#### **Section I: Methods and Application**

Jan.	13: Introduction, Methodology & Logic	
	15: The value of philosophy, <i>Apology</i>	PBF, 18-37
	20: <i>Apology</i> (cont.)	
	<b>22: Quiz 1</b>	

#### **Section II: God and Evil**

Jan.	27: The Ontological Argument	PBF, 42-44
	29: The Cosmological Argument	PBF, 44-46
Feb.	03: The Teleological Argument	PBF, 47-51
	05: Pascal's Wager, <b>Quiz 2</b>	PBF, 52-55
	10: Russell "Why I'm not a Christian"	PBF, 56-59
	12: Hume, <i>Dialogues</i>	PBF, 60-94
	17: Mardi Gras, no class	No Class
	19: Best of all possible worlds	PBF, 95-96
	24: Review	
	<b>26: Exam 1</b>	

#### **Section III: Ethics & Society**

Mar.	<b>02-08: No Class (Spring Break)</b>	
	10: Utilitarianism	PBF, 457-476

	12: Criticisms	PBF, 477-495
	17: <i>Famine, Affluence, and Morality</i>	PBF, 495-503
	<b>19: Quiz 3</b>	
	24: Velleman "A Brief Introduction to Kantian Ethics"	PBF, 521-537
	26: Langton "Duty & Desolation"	
	31: Virtue Ethics	PBF, 561-571
Apr.	02: Friendship	
	07: <i>A Theory of Justice</i>	PBF, 572-585
	<b>09: Quiz 4</b> , <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (cont.)	
	14: Justice and Entitlement	PBF, 585-593
	16: Distributive Justice	PBF, 593-609
	21: Racisms	PBF, 628-638
	<b>23: Quiz 5</b> , Frankfurt "Bullshit"	Available online
	28: Review for Final Exam	

**[\*] Final Exam: Friday May 1 – 1:00pm to 3:00pm (HUMB 114)**