

# PHL 110 Intro to Philosophy: How to Get Better at Life

## University of South Alabama

---

### MEETING INFORMATION

Section 102: TR 12:30-1:45  
Classroom: HUMB 0112  
Section 103: 2:00-3:15  
Classroom: HUMB 0206

Instructor: Dr. Krile Thornton  
Email: [akrilethornton@southalabama.edu](mailto:akrilethornton@southalabama.edu)  
Office: Zoom  
Office Hours: By appointment

### DESCRIPTION

This course will introduce you to the field of philosophy, both one of the oldest intellectual pursuits in human history and a vibrant 21st-century discipline. While the field of philosophy encompasses a rich set of questions, this course will focus on one of the most fundamental questions of philosophy: How can I lead a better life? In answering this question, we will address such topics as: Who can I trust? What is friendship and why have friends? What justifies my beliefs? How can I deal with pain and suffering? What responsibilities do I have to myself and other people? Is something like college worth it, and if so in what way? We will build skills in thinking independently, self-reflection, and communication, but most importantly, we will practice using those skills to lead a better life.

### OBJECTIVES

1. Students will learn how to understand and engage philosophical texts and ideas
2. Students will relate creative or analytical works to their genre or their cultural, social, or historical contexts. This University General Education Student Learning Outcome is understood in Philosophy as follows: Students will be able to evaluate arguments, and apply the notion of logical validity.
3. Students will cultivate the practice of philosophical self-reflection

### TEXT

You do not need to purchase a text for this course. I will provide or direct you to all of the readings you need.

### ASSESSMENT

#### **8 Deliverables (55% of total grade)**

- Deliverables are due at 11:59 PM on their due dates (usually Thursdays).
- They are equally weighted (each 6.875% of your total grade)
- There are 12 opportunities for deliverables; you may choose any 8 you want.
- If (and only if) you do all 12, you do not have to take the final. In that case, the grade I enter for your final exam will be your average deliverable grade.

#### **3 Exams (45% of total grade)**

- The first two exams are not cumulative.
- The third exam (the final) is cumulative.
- The exams are equally weighted.

GRADING  
SCHEMA

A	B	C	D	F
90 - 100	80 - 89.9	70 - 79.9	60 - 69.9	0 - 59.9

DELIVERABLE INFO **Time Commitment**

Each deliverable is different. Some require an analysis of the reading, some a written personal reflection, some an experience (like an interview, or trying on a new habit daily for a week). So the length of time they take to complete varies quite a bit. When a deliverable is especially involved or requires work over several days, I flag it in the syllabus (e.g. "Start D11 on Monday").

### Grading

Because each deliverable is different, I cannot provide one rubric that will work for every deliverable. However, I will use the following general grading scale:

- 10

Exceptionally good work. Clear, thoughtful, thorough. Carefully engages readings. Makes connections between ideas from both class and readings. Explains thought process. Answers questions or other prompts about the texts, authors, etc. demonstrate careful reading. Rarely achieved.

- 9

Quite good work. Writing is at "professional email" level. Responses are thoughtful. Answers to questions demonstrate reading of the texts, prompts, or course material. Draws on our discussions in class.

- 8

Writing is at "professional email" level, but responses seem quick, do not adequately engage the course materials, and seem to miss the mark in response to prompts or answers to questions about the texts, authors etc. There is explanation of the reasoning involved.

- 7

Writing is dipping below "professional email" level. Responses too quick and do not engage the course material or demonstrate understanding of it, though there is some explanation of the reasoning involved.

- 6

Writing is clearly below "professional email" level. Responses far too quick, off the mark, and lack an explanation of the reasoning involved.

Really, really far from the mark—but you tried! We should talk.

## DEATHTRAPS

### Absences

- You have four “sick days.”
- You may use them however you want. I do not need a doctors’ or boss’ note explaining your absence, and such a note will make no difference to whether your absence uses up one of your sick days.
- **HOWEVER:** I suggest you use them wisely because...
- If you miss more than four classes, **your final grade will be adjusted down by 2% for every additional class you miss.**
- For example, if your final grade was 91% and you missed five class periods, your adjusted final grade would be 89%. If you missed five class periods, your adjusted final grade would be 87%.

### Plagiarizing

- You are responsible for knowing what plagiarism is.
- You are responsible for avoiding it.
- If you plagiarize on an assignment, you will get a zero on the assignment, even if you did not know you were plagiarizing or know what plagiarism is.
- If you plagiarize on an assignment, I will report the fact that you plagiarized to the appropriate authority.

### Cheating

- Don’t cheat.
- If you cheat, you will get a zero on whatever you cheated on and no opportunity to make it up.
- If you cheat, I will report the fact that you cheated to the appropriate authority.

## POLICIES

**Honor code:** Each student is expected to read, understand, and abide by the university’s Code of Student Conduct (which can be found in the USA student handbook).

**Technology:** Cell phones, laptops, tablets, etc. must be kept out of sight and out of use during class. If you require accommodations that require such technology, please talk to me about it.

**Accommodations:** If you have a condition that interferes with your ability to participate in this course, you may be entitled to accommodations. Please contact the Office of Student Disability Services at (251) 460-7212 or [disabilityservices@southalabama.edu](mailto:disabilityservices@southalabama.edu).

## PRELIMINARIES

### 1/19 I.1 Intro and FAQ

*No new readings*

## FIRST PART

### 1/26 I.2 How to Manage Your Time (You Don't Have a Ton of It Left)

*Start D2 on Monday or earlier*

Read: "On the Shortness of Life" by Seneca

Read: "The Moral Bucket List" by David Brooks (NYT)

Listen (optional): "This is Water" by David Foster Wallace

Read (optional): "Beyond Digital Ethics" by Cal Newport

### 2/2 I.3 How to Reason Like a Champ

Read: Interactive Essay: "Reason like a Champion"

Read: "Well-Crafted Arguments"

### 2/9 I.4 Logic Camp

*No new reading.*

### 2/16 I.5 How Not to Be Duped by Statistics

Read: The Median Isn't the Message by Stephen Jay Gould

### 2/23 I.6 Stats again

Read: Inductive Reasoning

Read: Induction by Enumeration

Read (Optional): "Thinking Fast and Slow reviewed by Frank J. Babelski" from the CIA's Intelligence in Public Literature

3/2     **1.7 Review and Exam Week**  
Read/Study: Study Guide for Exam I  
  
*No new reading.*

## SECOND PART

3/9     **8. How to Know when to Break the Rules**  
  
Read: *Crito* by Plato  
Read: "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" by Martin Luther King, Jr.  
Read (optional): "Socrates in an Age of Trump" by Nikos Konstandaras (NYT)

3/16    **9. How to be a Gadfly**  
  
Read: *Euthyphro* by Plato  
Watch: "Euthyphro Animated"  
Read: Interactive Essay: *Socrates' Apology* by Plato  
Listen (optional): "Method Man: Plato's Socrates" from History of Philosophy without Any Gaps" Podcast

3/23    **10. How to Be in Control**  
  
*Start D10 on Monday or earlier*  
Read: Deliverable 10 (Even if you do not do D9, you must read it.)  
Read: Chapters 1 and 2 from *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a F\*ck*  
Read: Epictetus' *Enchiridion* Chs. I-XXI (pages 215-224)

3/30    **11. How to Deal with Suffering + Review**  
  
*Start D9 on Monday or earlier*  
Read: "Early Buddhism: Basic Teachings" by Mark Siderits  
Read: "Buddhists in Love" by Lisa Feldman Barrett and John Dunne

4/6     **12. Exam Week**  
*No new reading.*

## THIRD PART

### 4/13 13. How to Live a Life of Pleasure

Read: "Letter to Menoeceus" from Epicurus

Watch (Optional): PHILOSOPHY – Epicurus by The School of Life

Read: "Enjoy!" by Sandy Grant (Aeon)

Listen (Optional): "Am I Bothered?: Epicurean Ethics" from History of Philosophy without Any Gaps

### 4/20 14. How to Live a Life of Virtue and Friendship

Read: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* Book II, Chapters 1-3 and 7-9

Read: Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* Book VIII

### 4/27 15. How to find an education

Read: Plato's "Allegory of the Cave"

Read: Du Bois' "Of the Coming of John"

### Final Exam (Exam #3)

If you are in PHL 110.XXX (typically meet at XXX pm), your final is on XXX

If you are in PHL 110.XXX (typically meet at XXX pm), your final is on XXX

\*Note that the syllabus is subject to change and likely will be changed. You will always be given advance notice if readings will be added or subtracted or if there will be any alteration in due dates or assignments.\*