

# Cover Sheet: Request 10896

## PHI3695 Philosophy and Death

### Info

Process	Course New/Close/Modify Ugrad Gen Ed
Status	Pending
Submitter	Palmer,John Anderson,III palmerj@ufl.edu
Created	4/4/2016 3:39:38 PM
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### Actions

Step	Status	Group	User	Comment	Updated
Department	Approved	CLAS - Philosophy 011615000	Witmer, Gene		4/4/2016
Added PHI3695syllabus.pdf					4/4/2016
College	Approved	CLAS - College of Liberal Arts and Sciences	Pharies, David A		4/12/2016
No document changes					
General Education Committee	Pending	PV - General Education Committee (GEC)			4/12/2016
No document changes					
Office of the Registrar					
No document changes					
Catalog					
No document changes					
College Notified					
No document changes					

## Course|Gen\_Ed|New-Close-Modify for request 10896

### Info

**Request:** PHI3695 Philosophy and Death

**Submitter:** Palmer,John Anderson,III palmerj@ufl.edu

**Created:** 4/4/2016 3:39:38 PM

**Form version:** 1

### Responses

**Course Prefix and Number** PHI3695

**Course Title**Philosophy and Death

**Request Type**Change GE/WR designation (selecting this option will open additional form fields below)

**Effective Term**Earliest Available

**Effective Year**Earliest Available

**Credit Hours** 3

**Prerequisites**Sophomore or higher standing or PHI 2010 or PHI 2100 or PHI 2630 or PHM 2204 or philosophy major or minor or instructor permission.

**Current GE Classification(s)**None

**Current Writing Requirement Classification** None

**One-semester Approval?**No

**Requested GE Classification**H

**Requested Writing Requirement Classification**None

**PHI 3695: PHILOSOPHY & DEATH**  
Section 022H, Summer A 2016  
Monday - Friday, 9:30 - 10:45 PM (period 2)  
Leigh Hall 142

**Course Description and Objectives**

Official catalog description:

A philosophical investigation of the nature and significance of death. The focus is on critical assessment of arguments regarding such topics as the definition of death, whether death is bad for the deceased, whether immortality is desirable or even conceivable, and the ethics of ending and starting lives.

It is often said that two things in life are unavoidable: death and taxes. What is the significance of the first of these? How should we think about the fact that we will die? This course explores the nature and significance of death for both ethics and the value of life. We will consider the following main questions:

- What exactly is death? How should it be defined?
- Is death by definition the end of a person? How might it be coherent to imagine a person surviving his death?
- Is death bad for the person who dies? Assuming death is the end, that person no longer exists to be harmed by death; in what way, then, can death be a harm to that person?
- If death is bad for the person who dies, is immortality necessarily desirable? What might make immortality a good thing?
- How should our understanding of the nature of death and its alleged badness inform the ethics of causing death? What makes it bad to kill? How does this explanation relate to standard ethical claims about killing?
- We do not normally find it to be a bad thing that there were large stretches of time before we were born in which we did not exist; how should we feel about the people who never did get to be born?
- When is it ethical to bring someone into existence? How should we think about population ethics and the question of how many people there should be, if any?

For most of these questions we will make use of an anthology of papers on philosophy and death. For the last two we will turn to a very provocative recent short book by the philosopher David Benatar, *Better Never to Have Been*, in which he argues that everybody who exists is worse off for having existed, that, for every one of us, it would have been better for us never to have existed. Benatar's argument for this interacts with many of the issues we'll have tackled already by that point and lead us to think about the differences between dying and never having been born as well as the ethical considerations relevant to reproduction.

**Contact Information**

Instructor: Ron Claypool

Email: ronclaypool@ufl.edu

Telephone: 392-2084 ext. 318

Office Hours: Monday - Thursday, 11:00-11:30 AM, *and by appointment*, in Griffin-Floyd (FLO) 318. No appointment is necessary for the fixed office hours.

### **Required Textbooks**

Samantha Brennan and Robert J. Stainton, eds., *Philosophy and Death* (Broadview Press, 2010)  
David Benatar, *Better Never to Have Been* (Oxford University Press, 2008)

### **General Education Objectives & Learning Outcomes**

This course is a Humanities (H) subject area course in the UF General Education Program. Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives. A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

PHI 3695 accomplishes these goals by applying general philosophical methodology to the historically significant and challenging topic of death and mortality. Students in this course should develop an understanding of the key questions about death and its significance both for the value of one's life and for the ethics of creating, prolonging, or ending life. They will become familiar with the questions regarding possible survival of death, the arguments for and against thinking of one's own death as a harm to oneself, and what sorts of considerations are relevant in thinking about the moral significance of causing death. In addition, the final weeks on Benatar's book will provide students with practice in examining a single sustained argument at length. Throughout the course, they will develop skills at thinking critically and clearly about matters of considerable emotional significance and demonstrate those skills in written work.

The General Education Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's) divide into three areas: CONTENT – students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline; COMMUNICATION – students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline; and CRITICAL THINKING – students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Students will satisfy the CONTENT SLO'S by demonstrating competence in dealing with the fundamental issues and arguments that have been central to consideration of philosophical problems related to death, such as the possibility of surviving death in some sense, the nature of death, and how death can be understood as a bad thing for the person who dies. The content will be accessed by way of close, careful consideration of historically important texts in philosophy. Competence in the content will be shown both in the written work and during in-class discussions. Students will also take an in-class final exam designed to test their competent command of the core course content. Students will satisfy the COMMUNICATION SLO's by preparing written responses on central ideas and arguments in the philosophical works being read in the class that will serve as the basis for class discussion throughout the semester; participating actively in the small-group and full-class discussions, in which students will consider the effectiveness of their fellow students' ideas and reasoning; and writing three short reading responses, on assigned topics designed to test students' critical thinking abilities, and one full essay on a death-related topic (to be approved by the instructor), all to be graded according to a rubric that specifies as criteria for assessment competent command of the relevant texts and

material discussed in class, perspicuous identification of the issues raised by the assigned topics, and development of a response that cogently supports the students' claims with little or no irrelevance. Students will satisfy the CRITICAL THINKING SLO's by developing their own thinking according to established philosophical standards in the writing of their three response papers, the final paper, and the essay responses on the final exam.

### **Assessment and Assignments**

Your final grade for the course will be based on the following assignments:

3 Response Papers: 45% (see below)

Final Paper: 35%

Average Score for Quizzes and In-Class Activities: 10%

Final Exam: 10%

### **CONVERTING PERCENTAGES TO A FINAL GRADE**

<u>Total</u> <u>%</u>	<u>Course</u> <u>Grade</u>	<u>GPA</u>
92-100	A	4.0
90-91	A-	3.67
88-89	B+	3.33
82-87	B	3.0
80-81	B-	2.67
78-79	C+	2.33
72-77	C	2.0
70-71	C-	1.67
68-69	D+	1.33
62-67	D	1.0
60-61	D-	0.67
0-59	E	0

## PAPERS

There will be three (relatively short, 1000-word minimum) response paper assignments, posted online and explained in class on Thursdays (5/19, 5/26, and 6/9), and due 7:00 AM the Sunday following. Of the three response papers the best (highest graded) will be worth 20%, the worst will be worth 10%, and the remaining one 15%. (So, the three response papers account for 45% of your final grade in the course.) There will also be a final paper (to be at least 1500 words), which will be on a topic selected by the student. This topic must be approved by the instructor, at a meeting with the instructor during his office hours or a scheduled appointment, and must substantively engage with at least one of the texts covered in the course. This final paper will be due at 7 AM on Saturday, 6/18, which will be worth 35% of your final grade.

**Late papers will not be accepted**, unless there is a *very* good reason; the instructor is the sole judge of the reason's merit. (You should *not* expect to get an extension.) If you fail to submit an assignment, you will receive a grade of zero for it.

Papers will be submitted online in the Canvas e-Learning environment for the class. All submissions **must** be MS Word documents (with a .doc or .docx extension). This is a mandatory requirement.

## FINAL EXAM

On the final day of class there will be an in-class final exam. This will be an essay exam featuring two questions. These questions will be drawn from at least five questions that will be made available a week prior to the exam and which will cover all of the topics discussed during the course.

## QUIZZES & OTHER IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENTS

There will be any number of quizzes given at any time during the course. Anything covered in the assigned readings or lectures up to that point (down to the minute) is fair game for a quiz. A missed quiz will get a score of zero. There will also be other in-class activities (such as small group projects) that will be graded. Each quiz or activity will be graded on a 10-point scale, and the average of these scores will count for 10% of your final grade.

## ATTENDANCE, PARTICIPATION & CLASSROOM POLICIES

Students are expected to attend class and to have done all assigned reading in advance. Failure to do so will adversely affect students' ability to perform well in this course. Attendance as such will not be taken. However, it is extremely difficult to do well on the graded material if the pertinent lectures and discussions have been missed. Students are held responsible for what is covered in class, as well as the readings. Arranging for a classmate to share his or her notes in case of a missed class is strongly suggested. Two other considerations: the quizzes are not fixed on the schedule, and getting a zero on a quiz will certainly lower your average quiz score; and it should go without saying that you can't get a good participation grade if you don't attend class.

Philosophy is not something that is effectively done all by yourself; discussion is vital both to understand complex positions from a variety of perspectives and to check your own reasoning.

The use of laptop computers, smart phones, or other electronic devices during class is not permitted. Eating food during class is disruptive and is not allowed. Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work are consistent with university policies specified at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

### **Canvas E-Learning Environment**

This course is supplemented by online content in the e-Learning environment known as "Canvas." To login to the e-Learning site for this course, go to <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/>, click the e-Learning in Canvas button, and on the next page enter your Gatorlink username and password. You can then access the course e-Learning environment by selecting PHH 3100 from the Courses pull-down menu at the top of the page. If you encounter any difficulties logging in or accessing any of the course content, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at (352) 392-4537. Do not contact the course instructor regarding computer issues.

### **Online Course Evaluation**

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course based on 10 criteria. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester. Students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

### **Academic Honesty**

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge, which states, "We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment." The Honor Code (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. Furthermore, you are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor. Plagiarism on any assignment will automatically result in a grade of "E" for the course. Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows: "A student shall not represent as the student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to): a. Quoting oral or written materials, whether published or unpublished, without proper attribution. b. Submitting a document or assignment which in whole or in part is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment not authored by the student." Students found guilty of academic misconduct will be prosecuted in accordance with the procedures specified in the UF honesty policy.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

### **Campus Health and Wellness Resources**

- U Matter, We Care: If you or a friend is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu) or 352-392-1575 so that a team member can reach out to the student.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: <http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>, 392-1575; and the University Police Department: 392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies.
- *Sexual Assault Recovery Services (SARS)*. Student Health Care Center, 392-1161.
- *University Police Department*, 392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies). <http://www.police.ufl.edu/>

### **Campus Academic Resources**

- *E-learning technical support*, 352-392-4357 (select option 2) or e-mail to [Learning-support@ufl.edu](mailto:Learning-support@ufl.edu). <https://lss.at.ufl.edu/help.shtml>.
- *Career Resource Center*, Reitz Union, 392-1601. Career assistance and counseling. <http://www.crc.ufl.edu/>
- *Library Support*, <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>. Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.
- *Teaching Center*, Broward Hall, 392-2010 or 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <http://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>
- *Writing Studio*, 302 Tigert Hall, 846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <http://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>
- *Student Complaints Campus*: [https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF\\_Complaints\\_policy.pdf](https://www.dso.ufl.edu/documents/UF_Complaints_policy.pdf)
- *On-Line Students Complaints*: <http://www.distance.ufl.edu/student-complaint-process>



## Schedule of Readings and Assignments

You are expected to have read the material by class on the date listed. For instance, when you come to class on July 6<sup>th</sup> you should have *already* read the paper by Bernard Williams. This schedule is subject to change.

### DEATH, PERSONAL IDENTITY & SURVIVAL

5/9/16: Introduction

5/10/16: Plato, Excerpts from *Phaedo*, 39-64

Last day to Drop without fee liability (before midnight)

5/11/16: *Phaedo* discussion

5/12/16: Perry, Excerpts from *A Dialogue on Personal Identity and Immortality*, 65-76

5/13/16: Davis, "Traditional Christian Belief in the Resurrection of the Body", 77-85

### THE METAPHYSICS OF DEATH

5/16/16: McMahan, "The Metaphysics of Brain Death", 118-141

5/17/16: McMahan discussion

5/18/16: Feldman, "The Enigma of Death", 142-161

5/19/16: Feldman & defining death discussion

The Nature of Death Response Paper explained, **Due: 5/22 at 7 AM**

### THE BADNESS OF DEATH

5/20/16: Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus" & "The Principle Doctrines", 163-171; Lucretius,

Excerpts from Book Three of *On the Nature of Things*, 172-176

5/23/16: Nagel, "Death", 177-184

5/24/16: Silverstein, "The Evil of Death", 185-206

5/25/16: Williams, "The Makropulos Case", 207-223

5/26/16: Fischer, "Why Immortality is Not so Bad", 224-238

The Badness of Death Response Paper explained, **Due: 5/29 at 7 AM**

5/27/16: Brennan, "Feminist Philosophers Turn Their Thoughts to Death", 239-246

### THE ETHICS OF KILLING

5/30/16: Memorial Day, NO CLASS

5/31/16: Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion", 249-265

6/1/16: Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral", 266-284

6/2/16: Sinnott-Armstrong, "You Can't Lose What You Ain't Never Had", 285-296

6/3/16: Badness of Abortion discussion

6/6/16: Glover, "The Sanctity of Life", 351-361

6/7/16: McMahan, "The Wrongness of Killing and the Badness of Death", 362-379

6/8/16: Brennan, "The Badness of Death, the Wrongness of Killing, and the Moral Importance of Autonomy", 380-394.

6/9/16: Badness of Killing discussion

The Badness of Killing Response Paper explained, **Due: 6/12 at 7 AM**

**DAVID BENATAR'S *BETTER NEVER TO HAVE BEEN: THE HARM OF COMING INTO EXISTENCE***

6/10/16: "Introduction", "Can coming into existence ever be a harm?", 1-28

6/13/16: "Why coming into existence is always a harm", 28-59

6/14/16: "How Bad is Coming into Existence?", 60-92

6/15/16: "Having Children: The Anti-Natal View" & "Abortion: the 'Pro-Death' View", 93-162

6/16/16: "Population and Extinction" & "Conclusion, 163-226

6/17/16: Final Exam

**6/18/16: Final Paper Due at 7 AM**