

Course Information

“Some people would rather die than think. And they do.” – Bertrand Russell

Contact Information, etc.

Professor Mara Harrell

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mharrell@ucsd.edu

Student Walk-in Hours

TTh 3:30-4:30

A&H 0464

TAs

Hagge Cadenas

Ying Liu

Email

hcadenas@ucsd.edu

yil065@ucsd.edu

Student Meetings

By appointment

By appointment

Description

“For philosophy is merely the attempt to answer such ultimate questions, not carelessly and dogmatically, as we do in ordinary life and even in the sciences, but critically after exploring all that makes such questions puzzling, and after realizing all the vagueness and confusion that underlie our ordinary ideas.” – Bertrand Russell

Everyone is a philosopher. As Russell said, philosophy is a discipline of questions, and many of the most important questions in the history of philosophy are probably some of the same questions you have asked yourself. Where do we come from? What is the nature of the universe? Can I really know anything about it? What is knowledge? Who am I? How should I live? In this course, we will explore various answers to these questions, and look at the philosophers who have historically made these arguments.

You will learn what many talented and well-respected philosophers have to say about these questions, but the class is designed to get you *doing* philosophy, not just learning about it. You will be asked to articulate your own views on these subjects, and challenged to see whether these views make sense in light of the arguments we encounter.

The course will develop some knowledge of the history and methods of philosophy, but the real point is to get you asking important questions, reasoning clearly and capably, and sharpening your critical thinking skills—developing abilities, in other words, that will make a difference in your life long after specific content details have faded from memory.

In this course, you will:

- summarize [arguments in texts](#)
by annotating your reading
- represent [the structure of arguments](#)
made by others with argument diagrams
- discuss [the philosophical aspects](#)
of different problem situations
- explain [how philosophical frameworks](#)
have bearing on each problem situation
- evaluate [arguments](#)
based on their strengths and weaknesses
- create [an argument](#)
supporting your evaluation of a text
- consider [objections](#)
to your evaluation, and refute those objections

in order to:

- analyze [arguments](#)
from books, articles, policy proposals, op-eds,
- identify [the philosophical aspects](#)
of many different problem situations
- describe [philosophical ideas](#)
and theories that may apply to various problem situations
- articulate [your own ideas](#)
both verbally and visually to communicate your thinking

Texts

For this class, the required reading is either chapters in the textbook or articles by individual philosophers. The required textbook for this course is *What is the Argument* by me. I feel weird about requiring you to buy a textbook I wrote, so I will post the page-proof version of it on Canvas. Since it's a page-proof, there might be some mistakes, but I will let you know about them. I will also post pdfs of all of the other readings on Canvas.

Assignments & Grading

There will be three types of assignments in this class: **reading quizzes, regular homework assignments, argument diagrams, and paper assignments**. The reading quizzes will be delivered through and graded automatically on Canvas, while the other assignments will be submitted through Canvas and graded by the TAs. The assignments in this course will not be graded in the traditional fashion. Instead, they will all be graded on a "satisfactory/unsatisfactory" basis. The system is called "**specifications grading**." An assignment is "satisfactory" if it has met all the specifications for that assignment. The specifications for each assignment will be described in more detail in the Assignments folder on the Canvas site for this course.

Your final grade in this course will then be determined by how many of the assignments you have completed satisfactorily (see below). This means that you can choose what grade you would like to earn in this course and aim toward that grade as it will depend on the successful completion of various assignments. There will be rubrics available so you can see how each assignment is graded.

What counts as "satisfactory" for each assignment?

Quizzes: Answering at least 90% of the questions correctly on a quiz earns a grade of "satisfactory."

Homework: Answering at least 90% of the questions correctly on a homework assignment earns a grade of "satisfactory." The criterion for a correct answer to a homework problem will be explained in the instructions.

Papers: A list of several specifications that the assignment must meet will be given in the instructions for each assignment. Earning a grade of "satisfactory" means that the assignment has met *all* of the specifications.

What happens if what I turn in isn't deemed "satisfactory"?

The point of having a grading system like this is to make the student's final grade in the course actually indicate the level of mastery of the material the student achieved. In traditional points-based grading, a student can consistently produce sub-standard work and still pass the class, in which case the passing grade does not reflect the fact that the student may not have actually mastered *any* of the material at all.

So, what to do? The answer is to give the students ways not only to master the content but also to demonstrate that mastery. So, for any assignment that is deemed unsatisfactory, the student can **revise and resubmit** it within 48 hours of the notification of the grade. On the other hand, the student should have incentives to turn in their best work on the first try. This leads to tokens:

TOKENS: Each student will begin the quarter with 4 tokens. You may use one or more of them throughout the quarter. A token will allow you to either (1) **resubmit** an assignment (one or more times) or (2) receive **an extension** on an assignment (only one per assignment, and only as long as the extension is arranged with the TA before the assignment's deadline). An exception: for the quizzes, you will have three attempts to earn a "satisfactory" on each, no token needed.

How do I revise and resubmit an assignment?

Revising and resubmitting an assignment requires (1) revising the assignment based on the feedback given by the TA and (2) a reflection (a short description of how you used the formative feedback you received to improve your revision).

Will late assignments be accepted?

For the Homework and Papers there is a 48-hour grace period to submit the original assignment. This means that, for any of these assignments, you can submit up to 2 days after the stated deadline and still have the assignment graded. However, the **only** assignments a student can revise and resubmit (in the case of earning an "unsatisfactory" grade) are those which the student has submitted **BEFORE** the stated deadline, or have used a token for an extension. This means that if you submit your assignment during the grace period without using a token, you will **NOT** be able to revise and resubmit if the assignment earns a grade of "unsatisfactory." Additionally, any assignments submitted after the grace period are automatically "unsatisfactory."

So, what do I have to do to get an A (or B or C) in this class?

As stated above, the grade you earn depends on the number of quizzes, homework, and paper assignments you complete satisfactorily.

There are four types of assignments in this course:

1. Insultingly easy syllabus quiz
2. Quizzes
3. Homework Assignments
4. Paper Assignments

Each assignment has its own set of criteria of adequacy, included with the assignment description. The earned grade of “satisfactory” required for each final letter grade:

	A	B	C	D
1. <i>Insultingly Easy Syllabus Quiz</i>	1/1	1/1	1/1	1/1
2. <i>Quizzes</i>	7/8	6/8	5/8	4/8
3. <i>Homework</i>	7/8	6/8	5/8	4/8
4. <i>Paper Assignments</i>	3/3	2/3	1/3	0/3

For a course grade of “F”, just do less than what’s required for a course grade of “D.”

Can I only get A, B, C, D, or F? No plusses or minuses?

Actually, you *can* earn a + or - attached to your base grade in the following situations:

You will receive a ‘+’ on the letter grade if you earn a grade of “satisfactory” on one of #2, 3, or 4 with the percentage that corresponds to a higher grade. You will receive a ‘-’ on the letter grade if you earn a grade of “satisfactory” on one of #2, 3, or 4 with the percentage that corresponds to a lower grade.

- **Example:** Do everything for a grade of C, but in one category (#2, 3, or 4) earn what you would need for a B ⇒ **Earn a C+**
- **Example:** Do everything for a grade of B, but in one category (#2, 3, or 4) earn only what you would need for a C ⇒ **Earn a B-**

Note: An A and an A+ are both a 4.0 in your GPA calculation, however, if you exceed all the requirements to earn an “A” in the class, then your course grade will be “A+”.

How can I keep track of my grade in this course?

Find the grade listed above for which you met all of the listed requirements. That will be your course grade! You can track your progress by determining what percentage of the quizzes, the homeworks, and the papers you have completed. As a shortcut, you can use the **Find Your Grade** document for details.

IMPORTANT! Please note that although Canvas will display the grades that you have earned on each assignment, the score in the “Total” column in the gradebook has no meaning and does **NOT** correspond to your grade the class.

Attendance

Attendance is not required. That being said, there are many reasons to come to the lectures. First, in the lecture, we will cover material that is not in the reading, so the best option is to use the text *and* come to class. Additionally, you can’t have your questions answered while you are reading the text or watching a recording. In the lecture, you can have your questions answered in real time, and I can offer several alternative explanations if one isn’t sufficient. And finally, both the verbal and non-verbal feedback I get from students in class helps me determine whether I am going too fast, or students are confused.

General Information

Waitlist

Students will be admitted to this class according to their place on the waitlist.

Professor Harrell's Student Walk-in Hours

If you cannot make it to the scheduled walk-in hours, please contact me to make an appointment. Also, whenever I am in my office with the door open, you are welcome to stop in.

I encourage you to use the student walk-in hours as an opportunity to clarify points you don't understand, get additional readings, talk about the subject matter in relation to your own interests, go over work in progress, or address problems you may be having in the course.

Visit early and often. Email is the most reliable way to contact me.

Emailing Professor Harrell

I am happy to reply to emails sent from UCSD email addresses. Replies can be expected within 24-48 hours. In order to ensure that I do not miss your email, you should put "Phil 1" in the subject line.

Please note that I do not reply to emails from non-UCSD addresses, and there are two subjects I do not discuss by email, even if they are sent from a UCSD account. These are:

- a) Requests for information about an exam or other assignment due during exam week that arrive in the 24-hour period immediately preceding the exam or assignment deadline.
- b) Requests to adjust your final class grade. If you have an issue with your grade, please make an appointment to discuss it during my student walk-in hours next quarter.

Help with Assignments

In addition to Professor Harrell and the TAs for this course, there are services on campus to help students with coursework.

Office of Academic Support & Instructional Services (OASIS): OASIS offers free, one-on-one tutoring for students (<http://oasis.ucsd.edu>). Tutoring services are designed to guide students to the point at which they become independent learners, no longer needing a tutor.

Teaching + Learning Commons: The Teaching + Learning Commons offers a range of services that will benefit you in this class and others. Their free services include one-on-one and group consultations for written assignments and oral presentations, content tutoring, or understanding various learning strategies. You can drop by in person on the lower level of Geisel Library or make an appointment online at <http://commons.ucsd.edu>.

Policies

Cell Phones, Laptops, and Other Related Technologies

How students interact with portable technology devices can very much harm the dynamics of the classroom. Studies have shown that it is not only students that use these devices who suffer, but also the students around them.

Therefore, I expect you to **turn off your cell phone** before coming to class. There is to be no text messaging, checking email or otherwise "playing" with electronics during class.

Religious Observance

If you have a conflict between a religious holiday and a graded assignment, please contact one of us in advance so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

Accommodation for Disability

Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please arrange to contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged. Contact the OSD for further information: 858.534.4382 (phone), osd@ucsd.edu (email), disabilities.ucsd.edu (web)

Academic Integrity

Integrity of scholarship is essential for an academic community. The University expects that both faculty and students will honor this principle and in so doing protect the validity of University intellectual work. For students, this means that all academic work will be done by the individual to whom it is assigned, without unauthorized aid of any kind. More information about UCSD's policy on academic integrity is available at <http://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/appendices/2>

Health and Well-being

Take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this quarter by eating well, exercising, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress.

All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. There are many helpful resources available on campus and an important part of the college experience is learning how to ask for help. Asking for support sooner rather than later is almost always helpful.

If you or anyone you know experiences any academic stress, difficult life events, or feelings like anxiety or depression, we strongly encourage you to seek support. If there are issues related to coursework that are a source of particular stress or challenge, please speak with me, so that I am able to support you. UC San Diego provides several resources to all enrolled students, including:

Counseling and Psychological Services (858-534-3755 | caps.ucsd.edu)

Student Health Services (858-534-3300 | studenthealth.ucsd.edu)

CARE at the Sexual Assault Resource Center (858-534-5793 | care.ucsd.edu)

The Hub Basic Needs Center (858-246-2632 | basicneeds.ucsd.edu)

Course Schedule*

Week/Day	Reading	Assignment Due
Introduction		
1 T 4/2		
1 Th 4/4	Harrell, Ch1; Plato I	<i>HW #1 due Monday, 4/8, 11:59pm</i>
2 T 4/9	Harrell, Ch4; Anselm; Aquinas	
2 Th 4/11	Harrell, Ch6; Hume I; Paley	<i>HW #2 due 2:00pm</i> <i>Insultingly Easy Syllabus Quiz due Friday, 4/12, 11:59pm</i>
Epistemology		
3 T 4/16	Harrell, Ch7; Plato II	Quiz #1 due 2:00pm
3 Th 4/18	Harrell, Ch8; Descartes I	<i>HW #3 due 2:00pm</i>
4 T 4/23	Hume II (Sects 4&5 only)	Quiz #2 due 2:00pm
4 Th 4/25	Harrell, Ch9; Popper	Paper #1 due Friday, 4/26, 11:59pm
Metaphysics		
5 T 4/30	Harrell, Ch10; Descartes II	Quiz #3 due 2:00pm
5 Th 5/2	Ryle	<i>HW #4 due 2:00pm</i>
6 T 5/7	Harrell, Ch11; Smart	Quiz #4 due 2:00pm
6 Th 5/9	Fodor	<i>HW #5 due 2:00pm</i>
7 T 5/14	Harrell, Ch13; Searle; Dennett	Quiz #5 due 2:00pm
Ethics		
7 Th 5/16	Harrell, Ch17; Rachels I	Paper #2 due Friday, 4/17, 11:59pm
8 T 5/21	Harrell, Ch18; Rachels II	Quiz #6 due 2:00pm
8 Th 5/23	Harrell, Ch20; Mill	<i>HW #6 due 2:00pm</i>
9 T 5/28	Kant	<i>HW #7 due 2:00pm</i>
9 Th 5/30	Singer; Regan	Quiz #7 due 2:00pm
10 T 6/4	Cohen	Quiz #8 due 2:00pm
10 Th 6/6		<i>HW #8 due 2:00pm</i>
M 6/10		Paper #3 due 11:59pm

* Subject to change