

Additional readings may be added or substituted in over the course of the semester, and the timing of the readings will be determined as we go along, so to keep up on the readings you have to attend class in order to know what’s coming next and when.

The course web site is here: <http://philosophy.tamu.edu/~gary/PHIL251>. To access many of the materials you will need to enter the following ID and password that you’ll be given in class:

ID = _____ password = _____

Also on the course web site will be lists of questions for students to answer while doing the assigned readings, copies of handouts used in the course, and links to two on-line encyclopedias of philosophy, to various parts of the TAMU Student Rules, etc.

Overview of course requirements: Letter grades recorded for the course will be based on a weighted average of the following components.

<u>Component</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>Combined average</u>	<u>Letter grade</u>
First midterm exam	33.3%	=> 90%	A
Second midterm exam	33.3%	=> 80% & < 90%	B
Final exam	33.4%	=> 70% & < 80%	C
		=> 60% & < 70%	D
		< 60%	F

Extra credit quizzes up to 5% bonus on combined average

Details on the exams: These will be part multiple choice, part essay. The second midterm exam will include questions on some of the material covered by the first exam and the final will be comprehensive. The first midterm exam will be given on or around Thursday, February 25. The second midterm exam will be given on or around Tuesday, April 6 The specific dates of the two midterms will be announced at least one week in advance. The final exam will be Friday, May 7, from 12:30 to 2:30.

Multiple choice portion: Students are responsible for bringing the correct Scantron form (the 8.5x11" grey ones with no space for an essay and “Form No. 0-101607-TAMU” inscribed along the left margin) and a #2 pencil to the exams.

Essay portion: Essays will be assigned letter grades with the following assumed percentage values.

A+ = 100%	B+ = 87.5%	C+ = 77.5%	D+ = 67.5%
A = 95%	B = 85%	C = 75%	D = 65%
A- = 92.5%	B- = 82.5%	C- = 72.5%	D- = 62.5%
AB = 90%	BC = 80%	CD = 70%	DF = 60%
			F = varies, 0% to 59%

Below is a general description of what we think about as we assign letter grades to written work.

1. We always assume that an essay is a midrange B (85%) “until proven otherwise.”
2. For an essay to move up from a midrange B, it must be adequate overall and outstanding in one or more respects.
 - (A) To be “adequate overall” it must do everything the directions asked for, and without making any significant mistakes.
 - (B) Different essays are outstanding in different respects. Sometimes an author does a particularly good job explaining the material we have studied, doing so in a succinct, but thorough and precise way. Other times an essay does an outstandingly good job on the critical or evaluative portion of the assignment, for instance by coming up with an original and insightful criticism of an argument we have studied, or by coming up with an original and insightful way of responding to an objection to an argument.
3. For an essay to move down from midrange B, it must either be incomplete or get something wrong.
 - (A) An essay is incomplete if it fails to do everything the instructions required (either explicitly, as in “describe two of the objections that Mill responds to in chapter two”; or implicitly, as when a student fails to consider an objection to the position he or she is adopting when that objection was discussed in class).
 - (B) Different essays get things wrong to different degrees. Sometimes an author just doesn’t write clearly. For example, “A *reductio ad absurdum* argument makes a false assumption” is an imprecise and misleading way of expressing the thought that “In a *reductio ad absurdum* argument, one assumes the denial of what one intends to prove.” Other times they say something that is just plain false. For example: “The ontological argument is an example of an *a posteriori* argument.”
4. Sometimes an essay is incomplete in some way or gets something wrong, but it is also outstanding in some way. In such cases a judgment call must be made.
 - (A) Sometimes, in our judgment, the outstanding aspects of an essay make up for, or more than make up for its inadequacies, and we give the essay a B or even an A.
 - (B) Sometimes we decide that the inadequacies outweigh the outstanding elements and the essay gets a C.
5. For an essay to warrant a D, it must be substantially wrong in multiple respects, and a D essay is almost never outstanding in any respect.
6. For an essay to warrant an F, it must either be radically incomplete, substantially wrong in a majority of respects, or otherwise give the impression that the student did not take the assignment seriously.

Details on extra credit and quizzes: An indeterminate number of times during the semester, quizzes will be given during class. These quizzes may or may not be announced ahead of time. A tally of each student's percentage of correct answers on these quizzes will be kept and at the end of the semester, students' course averages will be raised between 0% and 5% based on their quiz averages as displayed in the chart below. If and only if a student informs us in advance of a university excused absence on a given date, any extra credit quiz given on that date will not be included when determining the student's average score on the quizzes. As provided in a section 7.3 of the TAMU Student Rules, documentation of the excused absence may be provided later, but we must receive notification of the excused absence in advance of the class in question.

<u>Average score on quizzes</u>	<u>Resulting increase in course average</u>
=> 90%	+ 5%
=> 80% & < 90%	+ 4%
=> 70% & < 80%	+ 3%
=> 60% & < 70%	+ 2%
=> 50% & < 60%	+ 1%
< 50%	+ 0%

These quizzes will be the only form of extra credit available in the course.

Other policies:

Excused absences and makeups. Makeups will be allowed only for assignments missed due to excused absences and these will be handled in accordance with part I, section 7 of the TAMU Student Rules. Students are advised to be aware of their responsibility for reporting excused absences pursuant to that section of the rules, which states (in section 7.3) that "Students may be excused from attending class on the day of a graded activity or when attendance contributes to a student's grade, for the reasons stated in Section 7.1, or other reason deemed appropriate by the student's instructor. To be excused the student must notify his or her instructor in writing (acknowledged e-mail message is acceptable) prior to the date of absence if such notification is feasible. In cases where advance notification is not feasible (e.g. accident, or emergency) the student must provide notification by the end of the second working day after the absence. This notification should include an explanation of why notice could not be sent prior to the class."

Extra credit. Aside from the series of quizzes described above, no extra credit assignments will be allowed, but we may, in individual cases, consider factors such as improvement and extenuating circumstances.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) policy statement. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal antidiscrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact the Department of Student Life, Services for Students with Disabilities in Room B118 of Cain Hall, on the internet at <http://disability.tamu.edu/>, or by telephone at (979) 845-1637.

Academic Integrity Statement. The Aggie Honor Code states that "An Aggie does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do." Effective September 1, 2004, Texas A&M University has an Honor Code that defines campus policy on academic misconduct. The Aggie Honor System (<http://aggiehonor.tamu.edu/>) is charged with the enforcement of this Code. Students are advised to familiarize themselves with definitions of "academic misconduct" and procedures for handling it under Rule #20 of the TAMU Student Rules: <http://student-rules.tamu.edu/rule20>. Ignorance of these definitions and procedures does not exclude a student from prosecution under the system.