

PHIL 1020 – ETHICS
Spring 2020
Tues/Thurs

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Office Hours: Tuesdays, 2:00-4:00pm
and by appointment

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

In this course, students will:

- Develop an understanding of several major ethical theories developed over the last 2000 years
- Apply ethical theories to contemporary societal problems
- Develop an understanding of differing ethical commitments that frequently undergird disagreements and ideologies
- Improve their ability to support their ethical positions with good reasoning
- Improve their ability to synthesize and critically evaluate complex theoretical arguments
- Develop critical reading, writing, and thinking skills

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course provides an introduction to philosophical questions about the nature of ethics, including: Is there objective morality? Is morality relative to a particular cultural or religious tradition? What makes actions right or wrong? What is it to be a good person? What ethical obligations do we have towards others? Should we be ethical even when it doesn't always appear to be in our best interest to do so? What is a good life and is it necessarily free of pain and suffering? We will examine how philosophers from diverse traditions have attempted to answer these questions. We will also consider how various ethical frameworks might address contemporary moral issues as capital punishment and poverty. The purpose of this course is not to provide a definitive answer to these questions, but rather to help you understand the reasoning that underlies your own beliefs, as well as those who hold different views.

WHAT TO EXPECT

This course has a significant discussion component. Topics covered are controversial, and thoughtful intelligent people have held opposing views. We will have the opportunity to review several contrasting positions, but, ultimately, you are expected to engage the issues and form your own views. Your learning in this course will depend on your willingness to think critically and formulate your own views so that you can improve your ability to express them clearly and convincingly. ***You should expect that your views will be challenged and be willing to challenge the views of others.*** At the same time, it will be extremely important to ***respect each other*** in discussions. It is important to distinguish between the person offering a particular view and the view itself. The latter may be criticized, but not the former.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Technology & Classroom Behavior. Please refrain from behavior that is distracting or interferes with the learning of others, such as using electronics or talking over others. The bulk of our class time will be spent in large group discussion, which requires your active participation. To facilitate this, I strongly discourage the use of electronics (laptops, cellphones, tablets) in the classroom. Of course, there are many legit reasons why you might want to use technology – e.g. your textbook is only available to you on an ereader, you have a disability, you are a parent who needs to keep a cell phone on for a child emergency. Basically, use your common sense and be present for the duration of the class

Absences and Late Work. Absences for illness, or the serious illness or death of an immediate family member may be excused with the appropriate documentation, e.g. a doctor's note, or with my advance approval. Please talk to me as soon as practicably possible if you know that you will be missing a class. Late assignments will be accepted without deduction only on *sufficient prior* arrangement with me.

Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct. Paraphrasing or quoting another's work without citing the source is a form of academic misconduct. Even inadvertent or unintentional misuse or appropriation of another's work (such as relying heavily on source material that is not expressly acknowledged) is considered plagiarism. All work for this course must be completed by the person submitting it for evaluation. Anyone found guilty of plagiarism, cheating, forgery, falsification, or other forms of academic dishonesty will fail the course.

If you have any questions about using and citing sources, you are expected to ask for clarification. You plagiarize, you fail. Seriously. When in doubt, just ask me. I am here to help! For useful information about plagiarism, see: <http://www.indiana.edu/~istd/definition.html>

UCCSS expects all students to conduct themselves as honest, responsible and law-abiding members of the academic community and to respect the rights of other students, members of the faculty and staff and the public to use, enjoy and participate in the University programs and facilities. For additional information, see UCCS's Student Conduct Code at: <https://www.uccs.edu/dos/student-conduct>

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and believe you will need accommodations for this class, please register with Disability Services and provide them with documentation of your disability. They will work with you to determine what accommodations are appropriate for your situation. To avoid any delay, you should contact Disability Services as soon as possible. They are located in Main Hall room 105; their phone number is 719-255-3354, and their email is dservice@uccs.edu

Student Educational Records. All records related to this course are confidential and will not be shared with anyone, including parents, without a signed, written release. If you wish to have information from your records shared with others, you must provide written request/authorization to the office/department. Before giving such authorization, you should understand the purpose of the release and to whom and for how long the information is authorized for release.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- (1) *The Moral Life: An Introductory Reader in Ethics and Literature*, edited by Louis Pojman and Lewis Vaughn, 6th Edition, Oxford University Press 2018 (“TML” on reading list).
- (2) Simon Wiesenthal. *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness*. Schocken Press, 1998.
- (3) Additional articles will be available on Canvas

Nota Bene! Some of the readings for this course are *challenging*. Do not be surprised if you don’t immediately understand part of a reading. Part of the job of philosophers is to try to make sense of what an author is saying, and we will work together to do this. You should complete the readings for the week *before* they are discussed in class, although it will often be helpful to re-read them afterwards as well. See the attached course schedule for reading assignments.

EVALUATION CRITERIA and GRADES

Course Assignments

- 25% Attendance and Participation, including in-class assignments
- 25% Quizzes on Canvas (4 total)
- 25% Take-Home Midterm
- 25% Take-Home Final

Grading Scale

A	100-94	C	76-74
A-	93-90	C-	73-70
B+	89-87	D+	69-67
B	86-84	D	66-64
B-	83-80	D-	63-61
C+	79-77	F	60-0

COURSE CALENDAR

WEEK 1 INTRODUCTION to ETHICS

Tuesday
January 21 Review syllabus and expectations.

Thursday
January 23 Watch Malcolm Gladwell's speech at the University of Pennsylvania from February 13, 2014 (1 hour, 8 minutes) at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EWaPXzTDEDw>

Read a Rebuttal to Gladwell's speech from a Penn student at <http://www.thedp.com/article/2013/02/your-voice-preserving-a-dream>

WEEK 2 SELF-INTEREST and RELATIVISM

Tuesday
January 28 Plato, "The Ring of Gyges" (TML, p. 491-498)
James Rachels, "A Critique of Ethical Egoism" (TML, p. 515-526)

optional: Ayn Rand's "In Defense of Ethical Egoism" (TML, 498-507)

Thursday
January 30 Ruth Benedict, "The Case for Moral Relativism" (TML p. 124-131)
James Rachels, "Why Morality Is Not Relative" (TML, p. 143-155)

WEEK 3 SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY and UTILITARIANISM

Tuesday
February 4 Thomas Hobbes, "On the State of Nature" (TML, p. 39-49)
"Seaman Holmes and the Longboat of William Brown" (TML, p. 198-199)

Thursday
February 6 Jeremy Bentham, "Classical Utilitarianism" (TML, p. 199-204)
John Stuart Mill, "Utilitarianism Refined" (TML, p. 205-209)

WEEK 4 SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY and UTILITARIANISM cont.

Tuesday
February 11 Bernard Williams, "Against Utilitarianism" (TML, p. 222-233)

Thursday
February 13 Ursula Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas" (TML, p. 234-239)
Quiz #1 in Canvas opens at 5:30pm

WEEK 5 KANTIAN or DEONTOLOGICAL ETHICS

Tuesday Immanuel Kant, "The Moral Law" (TML, p. 243-259)
February 18 Onora O'Neill, "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics," (Canvas)
 Quiz #1 due in Canvas by 11:59pm

Thursday Kant, "The Retributive Theory of Punishment" (Canvas)
February 20 Nelson Potter, "Kant and Capital Punishment Today" (Canvas)

WEEK 6 VIRTUE ETHICS

Tuesday Aristotle, "Virtue Ethics" (TML, p. 313-326)
February 25 Velasquez et al., "Ethics and Virtue" (Canvas)
 optional: Annas, "Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing" (Canvas)

Thursday Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints" (TML, p. 343-355)
February 27 Mariana Alessandri's "Against Cheerfulness" (Canvas)
 optional: Frankena, "Critique of Virtue-Based Ethical Systems" (TML, p. 376-385)

Receive Midterm Prompt.

WEEK 7 FEMINIST ETHICS

Tuesday Alison Jaggar, *Feminist Ethics* (TML, p. 437-449)
March 3

Thursday Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care* (TML, p. 471-485)
March 5 **Quiz #2 in Canvas opens at 5:30pm**

WEEK 8 ETHICS in a GLOBALIZED WORLD

Tuesday Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (TML, p. 918-929)
March 10 Garrett Hardin, "The Tragedy of the Commons" (TML, p. 860-874)
 Quiz #2 due in Canvas by 11:59pm

Thursday Garrett Hardin, "Living on a Lifeboat" (TML p. 886-902)
March 12 Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Kindness to Strangers" (12pp, Canvas)

WEEK 9 BUDDHIST ETHICS

Tuesday Siddhartha Gautama, “The Four Noble Truths” (TML p. 552-557)
March 17 begin in-class viewing of film, *Fight Club*

Thursday continue in-class viewing of film, *Fight Club*
March 19 **Midterm due in Canvas by 11:59pm on Friday, March 20th**

WEEK 10 SPRING BREAK

March 23-27 😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊 **NO CLASSES** 😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊😊

WEEK 11 BUDDHIST ETHICS and EXISTENTIALISM

Tuesday finish in-class viewing of film, *Fight Club*
March 31 Read Charley Reed’s “*Fight Club: An Exploration of Buddhism*” (Canvas)

Thursday S. Cleary’s “Being and Drunkenness: How to Party Like an Existentialist” (Canvas)
April 2 begin in-class viewing of film, *Groundhog Day*
 Quiz #3 in Canvas opens at 5:30pm

WEEK 12 EXISTENTIALIST CHALLENGES

Tuesday finish in-class viewing of film, *Groundhog Day*
April 7 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* (TML, p. 99-110)
 Quiz #3 due in Canvas by 11:59pm

Thursday excerpt from Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo* (Canvas)
April 9 Albert Camus’s “Life is Absurd” (TML, 539-545)

WEEK 13 AN ETHICS of the EVENT

Tuesday Levi R. Bryant first 13 pages of “Ethics of the Event” (Canvas)
April 14 *i.e. read up to “Problems and Events” section on page 36*

Thursday Levi R. Bryant last 10 pages of “Ethics of the Event” (Canvas)
April 16 *i.e. read from “Problems and Events” to end of article*

WEEK 14 ETHICS and FORGIVENESS

Tuesday Book 1 of *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness* (p. 1-99)
April 21

Thursday Excerpts from Book 2 of *The Sunflower*
April 23 Moshe Bejski, pp. 111-117
 Dalai Lama, pp. 129-130
 Primo Levi, pp. 191-192
 Herbert Marcuse, pp. 207-208
 Dorothee Soelle, pp. 243-245
 Desmond Tutu, pp. 266-268

WEEK 15 ETHICS and MARKETS

Tuesday Michael Sandel's "How Markets Crowd Out Morals" (Canvas)
April 28

Thursday Michael Sandel's "Markets in Life and Death" (Canvas)
April 30

Receive Final Take-Home Prompt
Quiz #4 in Canvas opens at 5:30pm

WEEK 16 THE POINT(S) of ETHICS

Tuesday Eric Schwitzgebel's "Cheeseburger Ethics" (Canvas)
May 5 Bob Brecher's "Against Professional Ethics" (Canvas)
Quiz #4 due in Canvas by 11:59pm

Thursday **No class. Work on your final paper.**
May 7

FINALS WEEK Final Take-Home Exam is due to Canvas by 11:59pm on Tuesday, May 12th