

Introduction to Ethics

Philosophy 105

Section A

CRN 34761

TR 9:30-10:50, 207 Gregory Hall

Fall 2022

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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Office Hours: TR 12:30-1:30, and by appointment

Course Website: On Canvas (canvas.illinois.edu)

Course Description

This course is an introduction to ethical theory. Our overall goal will be to try to understand various ways of responding to the question "how should I live?" We will begin the course by getting a sense of how to do philosophy in general before briefly engaging with some foundational issues in ethical theory. We will then move on to discussing three prominent approaches to ethical theory: utilitarianism, Kantianism, and Aristotelian virtue ethics. In addition, at various points in the course we will also consider ethical questions having to do with particular issues of contemporary concern, such as famine relief, pornography, and abortion.

Course Objectives

Upon completing this course, students should have developed a basic acquaintance with some prominent approaches to ethical issues and some classical philosophical texts. In addition, students should also have developed the ability to engage in philosophical discussions by developing the ability to read, assess, and respond to philosophical arguments.

Prerequisites

None.

Required Texts

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Hackett Publishing (ISBN 9780872206052)

Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Gregor, Cambridge UP (ISBN 9781107401068)

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Ross, Oxford UP (ISBN 9780199213610)

Other readings listed in the schedule below will be made available on Canvas.

Grading

Three longer (4-5 page) papers: 75% (25% each)

Nine short response papers: 15%

Participation: 10%

Assignment and Grading Details

Longer papers: These are papers of about 4-5 full pages. Prompts will be provided, and there will be a choice of topics. The purpose of these longer papers is to give you the opportunity and the space to develop your thinking in a way not available on the short response papers. I don't read or comment on drafts, since I'm not able to do so for everyone, but I am happy to speak with you about your papers in office hours. The longer papers are submitted via Canvas, and they are graded on the standard A-F letter grade scale, about which I say more below. Late papers will be subject to a deduction of 1/3 letter grade per day late unless some previous arrangement has been made because of a sufficiently serious issue (such as an illness). Papers cannot be rewritten or otherwise "made up."

Response papers: These will be assigned in weeks when you are not working on a longer paper. They will be a few paragraphs and will involve your developing a response to a question I will email to you. The goal is to help you get thinking about the material. Ten are assigned; you have to complete (at least) nine. These papers, like the longer papers, are submitted online through Canvas, and they are graded for completion in good faith: an assignment

completed in good faith gets full credit, and otherwise no credit is awarded. Late response papers are not accepted, nor can they be rewritten or otherwise "made up."

Participation: Attendance is taken and is used, along with your level of involvement in the course, to determine a participation grade. (Coming to office hours and talking with me then also counts as participation.) Absences for sufficiently serious things, such as religious observances and illness, are excused.

Course Grades: Grades for the course are awarded according to the following scale:

≥3.85: A	2.85-3.14: B	1.85-2.14: C	0.85-1.14: D
3.50-3.84: A-	2.50-2.84: B-	1.50-1.84: C-	0.50-0.84: D-
3.15-3.49: B+	2.15-2.49: C+	1.15-1.49: D+	≤0.49: F

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Using anyone's work, published or not, without proper citation and presenting it as your own work for this course constitutes plagiarism, and is a violation of the academic integrity policies of the university. Submissions on Canvas are checked with Turnitin, a plagiarism detection tool, to ensure academic integrity standards are adhered to, and the FAIR (Faculty Academic Integrity Reporting) system is used to deal with academic integrity issues. The standard penalty for plagiarism is failure of the assignment, though a more severe penalty, such as failure of the course, may be imposed depending on the severity of the infraction.

You should speak with me in office hours or email me if you have *any* sort of question about how to avoid plagiarism, how to properly cite sources, and so on.

For more on academic integrity, such as what constitutes a violation thereof, possible sanctions, and so on, see the following:

<https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part4/1-401/>

<https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part4/1-402/>

<https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part4/1-403/>

<https://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1/part4/1-404/>

<https://provost.illinois.edu/policies/policies/academic-integrity/students-quick-reference-guide-to-academic-integrity/>

DRES Accommodations

It is important to me that the environment of this course is well-suited to everyone. If you have a certain need I should attend to, please bring your Letter of Accommodation from Disability Resources and Educational Services to me during my office hours and we will work out a plan. For more information about DRES accommodations, see <http://disability.illinois.edu/academic-support/accommodations>.

Various Other Policies, Advice, Things to Know, etc.

Course Decorum: We ought to treat ourselves and each other with respect; this includes speaking well and listening well. Be charitable and respectful to yourselves, to each other, and to me. Please limit the use of electronics in class to taking notes. When you email me, please use your university email address (so I can be sure who's emailing me in the first place).

Attendance and Participation: You should attend class regularly and participate, such as by actively listening to the lecture, taking notes, asking questions, and contributing to discussion. Participation also includes speaking with me in office hours about material in the course and philosophy more generally.

Covid-19: Following University policy, all students are required to engage in appropriate behavior to protect the health and safety of the community. Students are also required to follow the campus COVID-19 protocols.

Students who feel ill must not come to class. In addition, students who test positive for COVID-19 or have had an exposure that requires testing and/or quarantine must not attend class. The University will provide information to the instructor, in a manner that complies with privacy laws, about students in these latter categories. These students are judged to have excused absences for the class period and should contact the instructor via email about making up the work.

Students who fail to abide by these rules will first be asked to comply; if they refuse, they will be required to leave the classroom immediately. If a student is asked to leave the classroom, the non-compliant student will be judged to have an unexcused absence and reported to the Office for Student Conflict Resolution for disciplinary action. Accumulation of non-compliance complaints against a student may result in dismissal from the University.

Handouts and Slides: You should not expect to receive regular handouts, review sheets, PowerPoint slides, or anything like that in this course, so you should come to class and take notes. If you miss a day, get notes from a classmate.

On Grades: Regarding what grades mean: "A" means "excellent." A paper which receives an A is an outstanding paper; this is a high bar, since a student who receives an A consistently, throughout a course of study in philosophy, could potentially go to graduate school in the discipline, and so grades of A are rare. "B" means "good." "C" means "fair." "D" means "poor." "F" means "fail."

Regarding communication about grades: Instructors aren't really supposed to email students about grades, due to FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) regulations, so you shouldn't email me with questions such as "What did I get on such-and-such assignment?" or "What is my grade in the course right now?" Questions about grades should instead be raised in office hours. (Besides, you can always find your grades on Canvas or track them yourself, and you can always figure out your grade in the course with the info provided on this syllabus and a calculator.)

Doing Philosophy in General: I do not expect you to be perfect, or to be a genius, or to immediately and effortlessly understand the course material. That would be unreasonable. But I do expect you to think for yourself and try to figure things out. Some tips that can help guide you in doing philosophy and help you try your best can be found at Jim Pryor's website: <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/index.html>. In particular, you might find it helpful to look at his tips on reading philosophy, writing a philosophy paper, and his overview of some philosophical terms and methods.

In addition, I *highly* encourage you to come into office hours if you have questions about the material or problems understanding it. I cannot stress this enough. You do not need to have some super deep insight, question, or concern in order to come into office hours. That would also be unreasonable. Rather, you just need a question, concern, comment, or something like that which is honest.

Readings: In my view, reading for a philosophy class is somewhat different from other classes. Typically the readings are shorter, but more difficult and demanding. To understand the readings, then, I suggest you read slowly (probably more slowly than you're used to), engage the text actively as you read, such as by taking notes and asking questions in the margins, highlighting/underlining key concepts and arguments, and so on. We will refer directly to the readings during class, so you should also bring the relevant text to class.

Writing: We will talk about how to write a philosophy paper in this course, though we will not go into great depth about things like basic English grammar, sentence structure, and so on. As such, if you are having trouble with these more technical aspects of writing, I encourage you to check out the resources offered by the Writers Workshop at <https://writersworkshop.illinois.edu/>.

Schedule

Note: This schedule is subject to change; changes will be announced in class and/or via Canvas/email. I hope to figure out the readings for the days marked "TBD" based on our class's interests, though I've included a few ideas below.

Week	Date	Reading/Topic	Assignments Due
1	Aug 23 Aug 25	Introduction to the Course (no reading) On Logic and Arguments (no reading)	
2	Aug 30 Sept 1	Aristotle, <i>NE</i> I.3; Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> , <i>Republic</i> (selections) Bentham, <i>Principles of Morals, Rationale of Reward</i> (selections)	Response Paper 1
3	Sept 6 Sept 8	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch. 1-2 Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch. 2 cont'd	Response Paper 2
4	Sept 13 Sept 15	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch. 3 Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch. 4	Response Paper 3
5	Sept 20 Sept 22	Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" On Writing a Philosophy Paper (no reading)	Response Paper 4
6	Sept 27 Sept 29	Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism"; Nozick, "The Experience Machine" Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> I	Oct 2: Paper 1 due
7	Oct 4 Oct 6	Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> I cont'd Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> II (4:406-4:424)	
8	Oct 11 Oct 13	Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> II cont'd (4:425-4:445) Hill, "Pornography and Degradation"	Response Paper 5
9	Oct 18 Oct 20	Wood, <i>Kant's Ethical Thought</i> (selections) Williams, "The Human Prejudice"	Response Paper 6
10	Oct 25 Oct 27	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> II	
11	Nov 1 Nov 3	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> III.6-12, IV Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> VI	Nov 6: Paper 2 due
12	Nov 8 Nov 10	Macintyre, "Is Patriotism a Virtue?" or Driver, "The Virtues of Ignorance" Doris, <i>Lack of Character</i> (selections)	Response Paper 7
13	Nov 15 Nov 17	Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory and Abortion" Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"	Response Paper 8
14	Nov 22 Nov 24	Fall Break Fall Break	
15	Nov 29 Dec 1	Marquis, "An Argument that Abortion is Wrong" TBD (maybe Foot, "Killing and Letting Die", or maybe Nietzsche)	Response Paper 9
16	Dec 6	TBD (maybe Williams, " <i>The Women of Trachis</i> " or maybe Nietzsche)	Response Paper 10 TBA: Paper 3 due