

Introduction to Ethics

Philosophy 105

Section E

CRN 35449

TR 9:30-10:50, 331 Gregory Hall

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University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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Office Hours: TR 2:00-3:00, and by appointment

Course Website: On Compass (compass2g.illinois.edu) and my website, asmith.be/teaching (but see note below)

Course Description

This course is an introduction to ethical theory, understood as the philosophical study of morality. We will start by getting a sense of how to do philosophy in general before briefly engaging with some foundational issues in ethical theory. Then, we will 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 moral questions having to do with particular issues of contemporary concern, namely, 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 have developed the ability to engage in philosophical discussions by developing the ability to read, assess, and respond to core philosophical arguments.

Prerequisites

None.

Required Texts

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

Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Cambridge University Press (ISBN 9781107401068)

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Oxford University Press (ISBN 9780199213610)

Other readings listed in the schedule below are available on Compass.

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 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 Compass, and they are graded on the standard A-F 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, unexpected issue (such as a serious 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 that they help you get thinking about the material. Ten are assigned; you have to complete (at least) nine. These papers are submitted in hard copy in class, 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: It is important, for the development of your ability to think philosophically, that you engage with your fellow students and with me on the material in the course. Attendance is taken and is used, along with the level of course involvement, to determine a participation grade. (Coming to office hours and talking with me then will also count as participation.) Absences for sufficiently serious things, such as religious observances and serious 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. 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 email me if you have any sort of question about how to avoid plagiarism, proper citation, and so on.

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

http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1_part4_1-402.html

http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1_part4_1-403.html

http://studentcode.illinois.edu/article1_part4_1-404.html

DRES Accommodations

In this course, the learning environment aims to be well-suited to everyone. As such, if you have a certain need to which I should attend, please bring your Letter of Accommodation from Disability Resources and Educational Services to 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.

Classroom Decorum: We ought to treat ourselves and each other with respect; this includes speaking well and listening well. To facilitate a good learning environment, the use of cell phones, computers, tablets, and other electronics is not permitted during class time.

Handouts and Slides: You should not expect handouts or Powerpoint slides in this course, so you should 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 "failure."

Regarding communication about grades: Instructors aren't really supposed to email students about grades, due to FERPA 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 Compass 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 try. 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.

Readings: In my view, reading for philosophy is somewhat different from other classes. Typically the readings are shorter, but more difficult and demanding. To understand the readings, then, I suggest you 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. Since electronics are not permitted, this means that you should bring a hard copy of the text to class everyday, whether it is a book or a printed copy of the article(s).

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 grammar, basic 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 <http://www.cws.illinois.edu/workshop/>.

Course Websites: As I say above, you can find the relevant material for this course both on Compass and my website. That said, Compass should be your first stop when you are looking for articles and other course material. My website has the same materials uploaded, but I cannot accept your papers through it, so think of it, then, as more of a backup—that is, a place where you can find relevant course materials if Compass isn't working for some reason. A password is required to access the material at my website—I will tell you it in class, though you can email me if you forget.

Schedule

Note: This schedule is subject to change; changes will be announced in class and/or via Compass/email.

Week	Date	Reading/Topic	Assignments Due
1	Jan 16	Introduction to the Course (no reading)	
	Jan 18	On Logic and Arguments (no reading)	
2	Jan 23	Aristotle, NE I.3; Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> , <i>Republic</i> (selections)	Response Paper 1
	Jan 25	Bentham, <i>Principles of Morals, Rationale of Reward</i> (selections)	
3	Jan 30	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch. 1-2	Response Paper 2
	Feb 1	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch. 2 cont'd	
4	Feb 6	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch. 3	Response Paper 3
	Feb 8	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , ch. 4	
5	Feb 13	Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"	Response Paper 4
	Feb 15	Williams, "Utilitarianism and Integrity"; Nozick, "Experience Machine"	
6	Feb 20	On Writing a Philosophy Paper (no reading)	2/25: Paper 1 due
	Feb 22	Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> I	
7	Feb 27	Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> I cont'd	
	Mar 1	Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> II (4:406-4:424)	
8	Mar 6	Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> II cont'd (4:425-4:432)	Response Paper 5
	Mar 8	Kant, "Right to Lie" essay	
9	Mar 13	TBA	Response Paper 6
	Mar 15	Hill, "Pornography and Degradation"	
10	Mar 20	Spring Break - No Class	
	Mar 22	Spring Break - No Class	
11	Mar 27	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I	4/1: Paper 2 due
	Mar 29	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> II	
12	Apr 3	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> III, IV	
	Apr 5	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> VI, VII	
13	Apr 10	Curzer, "Is Care a Virtue for Health Care Professionals?"	Response Paper 7
	Apr 12	Doris, <i>Lack of Character</i> (selections)	
14	Apr 17	Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory and Abortion"	Response Paper 8
	Apr 19	Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"	
15	Apr 24	Marquis, "An Argument that Abortion is Wrong"	Response Paper 9
	Apr 26	Foot, "Killing and Letting Die"	
16	May 1	Thomson, "Turning the Trolley"	Response Paper 10 TBA: Paper 3 due