

PHL 212: Ethics
Monday-Friday 12-3
305 Swann Hall
Winter J Term Jan 2-17, 2020
Professor James B. Haile

Office: 231 Chafee Social Science Center
Office Hours: MTW 11-12

Course Description

Evaluation of major ethical theories. Application of moral reasoning to topics such as virtues and vices, human dignity, conscience, responsibility, moral dilemmas, and reasons to be moral.

Course Texts

All readings will be available on Sakai

Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to allow students to:

- A3- Think more clearly and cogently about their lives and the assumptions around which they organize their beliefs and/or actions.
- C3 – Develop and exercise diversity and inclusion responsibilities

Classroom Guidelines:

1. Attendance, Preparation, Participation:
 - a. **Participation:** Your success in this class depends upon your being in class and ready to actively and energetically engage in our collective readings and discussion. That also extends to actively listening, taking notes and reflecting on material covered in the readings and in classroom discussion. Participation encompasses more than just sharing your thoughts—you should additionally be asking questions, taking notes in class and while you read, as well as responding to the thoughts and comments of your fellow students. I simply expect that you will be in class every time, arrive punctually and be prepared.
 - b. **Attendance:** You will be allowed 3 unexcused absences during the term, no questions asked—more than that and your final grade will be negatively affected. Excused Absences must be accompanied with supporting documentation or arrangement in advance, again with documentation.
2. Reading Assignments:
 - a. ALL readings are to be done prior to class and fully. You should come to class with **your book and/or reading in-hand**, along with your notes from reading, and always something to say and/or ask.
 - b. ALL assignments will be available on the course Sakai site. Assignments must be printed and brought to class. Computers or phones will not be allowed, unless arranged with the professor.
3. Late Work:
 - a. All work is expected to be turned in according to the Deadline unless otherwise arranged prior to due date and in consultation with professor.
4. Classroom Culture: Respect and civility are expected at all times, for the professor as well as your fellow classmates. Our readings in the course will touch on sensitive issues, so we all need to keep open minds and respect the free exchange of ideas. You can disagree with someone, but you must thoughtfully express your disagreement with reasoned and responsible language. Do not interrupt the professor or fellow classmates while they are talking, and remember a productive conversation is never dominated by one voice.
5. Technology: Please put your cell-phones away and turn off sound; usage of tablets and/or laptops will not be allowed in-class, unless necessary for a documented learning disability.

Course Policies and Statements

1. **Disability:** Any student with a documented disability is welcome to contact me as early in the semester as possible so that we may arrange reasonable accommodations. As part of this process, please be in touch with Disability Services for Students Office at 302 Memorial Union, Phone 401-874-2098.
2. **Plagiarism:** Students are expected to be honest in all academic work. Cheating is the claiming of credit for work not done independently without giving credit for aid received, or any unauthorized communication during examinations. Any record of scholastic integrity infractions where actions have been taken (i.e., assignment of an "F" on an assignment and notification of the student's dean, dean's authorization to assign an "F" for the course, referral to the University Board on Student Conduct) will be forwarded to the Office of Student Life. A cumulative file will be maintained in that office. The Dean of Students shall notify the student's dean of subsequent infractions. **For a more comprehensive statement regarding plagiarism, please consult your student handbook, "Cheating and Plagiarism" sections 8.27.10-8.27.20.**
3. **Food:** EATING AND/OR DRINKING will not be permitted in class, unless provided by professor.

Student Evaluation

Attendance: 10%

Since we only have three weeks in the course, attendance is crucial. Class will be comprised of lecture (review); small in-class group discussion and writing (breakout session); and, larger group discussion. As such, students are only allowed to miss ONE class before lowering letter grade. After the THIRD absence, student will face a failing grade.

Breakout Group Assignments: 30%

Each class session there will be 1-2 group breakout sessions each class with questions to guide the conversation. Each group will select a recorder, who will write up the group's answers. At the end of each class, the writings will be collected and evaluated on a scale of 0-5. Writings should include the following: What is/are the major issues being discussed in the reading? How do the main concepts relate to the film and/or additional reading?

Midterm Exam: 30%

The midterm examination will cover the key concepts discussed the first two weeks of class.

Final Paper: 30%

The final paper will be a 3-5 page philosophical examination of one of the issues from week three.

Written Assignments

Writing Goals: Writing assignments are to develop and demonstrate the following skills:

- Student's understanding regarding various issues in philosophy;
- How students process information, plan, strategize and organize their thoughts;
- Practice how students generate a thesis statement and carry it through an essay format;
- To create for students many different opportunities for development in thinking and writing for success after early failure

Course Grading

Course Grading Scale:

A: 100-95	A-: 94-90	B+: 89-86
B: 85-83	B-: 82-80	C+: 79-76
C: 75-73	C-: 72-70	D+: 69-66
D: 65-63	D-: 62-60	F: 60 and below

A paper that meets some but not all of these criteria is a satisfactory ('C') paper. A paper that meets all of these criteria is a good ('B') paper. A paper that meets and exceeds these criteria is an excellent ('A') paper. (See below.)

Criteria:	Possible Grades:			
	A	B	C	D
Exposition	The paper answers the question(s) posed in the thesis statement correctly with superior efficiency and clarity.	The paper answers the question(s) posed in the thesis statement correctly and with adequate efficiency and clarity.	The paper incorrectly answers the question(s) posed in the thesis statement, or answers the question(s) correctly but not in a clear or effective way.	The paper fails to answer the question(s) posed in the thesis statement.
Organization	The paper exhibits a maximally clear and logical structure.	The paper exhibits an adequately clear and logical structure.	The paper exhibits fair organization with room for improvement.	The paper is extremely unorganized.
Coherence	The paper is maximally coherent.	The paper is adequately coherent	The paper is fairly coherent with some extraneous or irrelevant information.	The paper is mostly incoherent with a high amount of extraneous or irrelevant information.
Argumentation	The paper exhibits superior critical analysis, argumentative rigor, and logical acumen.	The paper exhibits good critical analysis, argumentative rigor, and logical acumen	The paper offers some degree of justification for its major claims, but the justification is weak or unsubstantiated	The paper offers little justification for its major claims.
Clarity	The paper is extremely well-written and contains no major spelling or grammatical errors	The paper is fairly well-written with some spelling and grammatical errors.	The paper is poorly written and contains several spelling and grammatical errors	The paper is virtually unreadable.

Course Calendar

Week One: Jan 2-3

Key Concepts: Freedom; Liberty; Duties; Obligations

Thurs: Introduction to Course; discussion of *Concepts* and *Issues*

Review I: John Locke, *Two Treatise*, “Of the State of Nature”; “Of the State of War” pages 105-114); Declaration of Independence)

Questions: What is the state of nature? What is human nature? What are basic human rights? Where do human rights come from? What obligations do these rights give us?

Breakout Session I: Watch, “What are Human Rights?”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5RR4VXNX3jA&feature=youtu.be>

Review II: John Locke, *Two Treatise* (“Of the beginning of Political Societies”; “Of the State of Nature”; Declaration of Independence)

Questions: Where does society come from? Why do we join society? Why follow the laws of society? How does his view of human nature influence his view of the best political order? What are the limits of human rights (freedom vs. license)? What is crime? What is the function of punishment? Who decides adequate punishment for crime?

Breakout Session II: Discuss, “What is the function/purpose of government? Why do we have Laws?”

Fri: Review I: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Chapters 11, “Of the Differences of Manners”)

Questions: What is the state of nature? What is human nature? What are basic human rights? Where do they come from? What obligations do these rights give us?

Breakout Session I: Watch, “Is Human Nature Evil?”
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-ILwQ_F8ko

Review II: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Chapters 13-14, “Of the Natural Condition of Mankind”; “Of the First and Second Natural Laws, and Of Contracts)

Questions: Where does society come from? Why do we join society? Why follow the laws of society? How does his view of human nature influence his view of the best political order?

Breakout Session II: Discuss Questions

Week Two: Jan 6-10

Key Concepts: Ethical Obligations, Care; Equality/Inequality; Community vs. Individual

Mon: Review: Kant, *Groundwork for a Metaphysics of Morals* (Chapter 2, “Moving from Popular Moral Philosophy to the Metaphysics of Morals”) pages 16-20; 27-30

Questions: Are there absolute moral obligations that we should hold? Where do they come from? How do we know them? What makes them universal? Do we have an obligations to persons or to ideas?

Breakout Session: Example, Little Girl and the Candy Shop

Tues: Review: Sara Clark Miller, “Reconsidering Dignity Relationally”

Questions: Should we reformulate our understanding of ethics from rationality to relationality? What would it mean to do so? What is the relationship between dignity and care?

Breakout Session: Watch, *Castaway*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zaQa4ttIyNo>

Weds: Review: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, Utopia* (Chapter 7, “Entitlement Theory” **150-153**, “Redistribution and Property Rights” **167-174**; Chapter 8, “Equality” **232-235**, “Equality of Opportunity” **235-239**, “Self-Esteem and Envy” **239-246**; Chapter 10, “Utopia and the Minimal State” **333-335**)

Questions: What is the relationship between state power and individual liberty? What is the relationship between individual liberty and human rights? Is healthcare a human right? Do doctors have a moral obligation to treat patients?

Breakout Session: Watch, CBS NEWS, “Zuckerberg Wall in Hawaii”
<https://www.cbsnews.com/video/zuckerberg-builds-controversial-wall-in-hawaii/>
Learn Liberty: A Project of IHS, “What Does it Mean to Be Libertarian?” <https://www.learnliberty.org/videos/what-does-it-mean-to-be-libertarian/>

Thurs: Midterm review

Fri: **MIDTERM EXAMINATION**

Week Three: Jan 13-17

Mon: Review I: Grace Clement, “Animals and Moral Agency: The Recent Debate and Its Implications” *Journal of Animal Ethics*

Questions: Should Universal Rights include animals? What is the basis for Universal Rights? Is there a distinction between Legal issues and Moral issues? Are Universal Rights legal or Moral issues?

Breakout Session I: Watch, “Understanding Animal Rights—Temple Grandin”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Oy-kAW3beqc>

Review II: Angus Nurse and Diane Ryland, “A Question of Citizenship” *Journal of Animal Ethics*

Questions: How do we reframe ethics to include non-human animals, and possibly non-human plants? What would it mean for ethics to include non-human animals and plants?

Breakout Session II: Watch, “Do Plants Have Consciousness?”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8YnvMpcrVI>

Tues: Review I: Seyla Benhabib, “Birthright Citizenship, Immigration, and Global Poverty” *University of Toronto Law Journal*

Questions: Should immigration be a human right? Why is statelessness an ethical problem?

Breakout Session I: Watch, AlJazeera, “Why are So Many People Stateless”
<https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/insidestory/2017/11/stateless-people-171104193249998.html>

Review II: Joseph H. Carens, “An Overview of the Ethics of Immigration” *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*

Questions: What is the relationship between human rights and legal, citizen rights? What ethical obligations do we have to one another? Should immigration be a human right?

Breakout Session II: Watch, “Tear Gas at Border”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nsH1EN6-TZI>

Weds: Review: Thomas Nagel, “Moral Luck”

Questions: To what extent does our capacity for moral action depend on the luck of external circumstances?

Breakout Session: Watch, “Why the American Dream is a Myth”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ydca1wzlheg>

Thurs: Discussion of Final Papers

Fri: No Class

Final Paper Due: Sunday January 20th by 5 pm on Sakai: NO LATE PAPERS; NO EXCEPTIONS