

PHIL 4

Introduction to Ethics

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Semester Year. Classroom.

Meeting Times.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course is a beginner's level exploration of ethical thinking and applications to real issues in the world. We will cover some theoretical matters about ethics: Are moral judgments true or false? Are moral rules relative to culture or people? What makes an action right or wrong? What makes a society just? Does morality depend on religion? We will also cover some applied issues in ethics: Is it wrong to kill animals? Is abortion wrong? Should recreational drugs be legalized?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete the course will...

1. Be able to understand, explain and discuss critically different ethical theories, meta-ethical problems and ethical and social issues;
2. Come to appreciate the complexity of the moral decisions they make every day and the moral issues that affect their lives;
3. Explain debates and positions clearly and precisely in written and oral form.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 20% Reading Assignments
- 25% Midterm Take Home Exam – Meta-Ethics & Normative Ethics
- 20% Research Project – Applied Ethics
- 25% Final Take Home Exam – cumulative
- 10% Participation

Reading Quizzes

Reading Assignments will be graded based on student engagement with the readings on Perusall. For full credit, you must annotate throughout the entire reading, and respond to at least one other student's annotation, question, or comment in readings of at least **10 weeks**, each worth 2 points. You are expected to engage with the required readings in sufficient detail for annotating, commenting, and critical discussion, and be conversant with the material so that discussion is substantive and lively. Annotations, questions, or comments should be done by **the day before** the reading is scheduled at **11:59pm** to count towards your grade. There will be no more than one quiz per week.

Midterm Take Home Exam

Midterm Take Home Exam is in long essay format, with two or three questions. The questions will be posted online at the end of week 6, and it is due on week 7, DATE/TIME. You will have **one** week to complete this assignment.

Research Project – Applied Ethics

This is a group activity. Each group will give a presentation and write a report (4–5 pages) on one of the topics in Applied Ethics or some other self-chosen topic (pending instructor's approval). For full credit, students have to (1) submit a report (4–5 pages), (2) give an in class presentation, and (3) ask questions to other groups.

Final Take Home Exam – cumulative

Final Take Home Exam is cumulative and in short essay format. The questions will be posted online on the last day of classes, and it is due on DATE/TIME. You will have **4** days to complete this assignment.

Participation

Participation will count towards student's final grade at the instructor's discretion. Attendance will be taken but do not expect a perfect grade merely for being an organic body.

NOTE: Things change – the Fates are fickle. Consequently, information found on this syllabus is subject to revision as we progress through the quarter: Readings and content may be added (or cut) depending on our rate of progress, and it may be necessary to amend the due date of the assignments. Revisions will be announced in lecture and posted online. It is each student's responsibility to keep informed of any changes.

MATERIALS

- Blackburn, Simon. *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics*. 2nd edition, Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Additional readings to be posted on my personal website

Students are expected to have done the readings and answered the quiz *before* lecture.

COURSE SCHEDULE & READINGS

WEEK 1: The Basics of Moral Arguments

- What is argument?
- Argument vs. Explanation.
- Deductive vs. Inductive.
- Objecting to Arguments.
- Thought Experiments: Reddit, "AITA, that if Jurassic Park were real, I would tell my husband that he cannot go." https://www.reddit.com/r/AmItheAsshole/comments/chzjl5/aita_that_if_jurassic_park_were_real_i_would_tell/.

WEEK 2 & 3: Meta-Ethics

- Cognitivism vs. Non-Cognitivism
 - Rachels *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, Chap 3.
- Objective vs. Subjective
 - Rachels *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, Chap 3.

- Relativism
 - Blackburn, *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics*, Chap 2.

WEEK 3 - 6: Normative Ethics

- Divine Command Theory
 - Blackburn, *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics* “The Death of God” pp. 10-9.
 - Dalai Lama *Ethics for the New Millennium*, chapter 15 “The Role of Religion in Modern Society” (online).
- Consequentialism: Egoism, Utilitarianism
 - Blackburn, *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics*, Chap 12.
- Deontology
 - Blackburn, *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics*, Chap 18.
- Virtue Ethics
 - Rosalind Hursthouse *On Virtue Ethics*, chapter 1, 2 & 8 (online).

WEEK 7 - 11: Applied Ethics

Here is a list of possible topics and respective readings for the Research Project assignment. Topics should be chosen by the end of the second week of classes.

- Euthanasia
 - Helga Kuhse "The Case for Active Voluntary Euthanasia".
 - Fr. Robert Barry "The Case against Active Voluntary Euthanasia".
- Abortion
 - Judith Jarvis Thomson "A Defense of Abortion".
 - Don Marquis "Why Abortion is Immoral".
 - Michael Tooley "Abortion and Infanticide".
- Drugs
 - Michael Huemer "America's Unjust Drug War".
 - Peter De Marneffe "Do We Have a Right to Use Drugs?".
 - James Q. Wilson "Against the Legalization of Drugs".
- Gun Control
 - Michael Huemer "Is there a right to own a gun?".
 - Nicholas Dixon "Handguns, Violent Crime, and Self-Defense".
- Animal Rights
 - Tom Regan "The Case for Animal Rights".
 - Peter Singer "All Animals Are Equal".

- Tibor R. Machan "Do Animals Have Rights?".
- Nathanael Johnson "Is there a moral case for eating meat?".
- Reddit, "AITA for keeping animal remains in a shared freezer?" https://www.reddit.com/r/AmItheAsshole/comments/d08a5y/aita_for_keeping_animal_remains_in_a_shared/.
- Immigration
 - Michael Huemer "Is There a Right to Immigrate?".
 - Stephen Macedo "The Moral Dilemma of U.S. Immigration Policy: Open Borders versus Social Justice?".
- Monogamy
 - John McMurtry "Monogamy: A Critique".
 - Bertrand Russel "Our Sexual Ethics".
- Famine
 - Peter Singer "Famine, Affluence, and Morality".
- Genetic Engineering
 - Heidi Ledford "Rididng the CRISPR Wave".
 - Michael J. Sandel. "The Case Against Perfection".
 - Matt Ridley "The New Eugenics".

WEEK 12 - 14: Social Justice

- Rawls
 - John Rawl *A Theory of Justice*, Chap 1.
- Nozick
 - Robert Nozick "Anarchy, State, and Utopia", Chap 7.
- Quotas
 - Antonin Scalia "The Disease as Cure: "In Order to Get Beyond Racism, We Must First Take Account of Race"".
 - Sheen S. Levine and David Stark "Diversity Makes You Brighter".
 - James Rachels "In Defense of Quotas".

GRADING

The usual grading scale will apply: 0-59% F, 60-62% D-, 63-66% D, 67-69% D+, 70-72% C-, 73-76% C, 77-79% C+, 80-82% B-, 83-86% B, 87-89% B+, 90-92% A-, 93-96% A, 97-100% A+.

Paper and exams will be graded based on the following **six** evaluation criteria:

Bare minimum: is the paper prompt or question addressed at all?

Clarity: Are the explanations of technical terms and arguments clear, understandable, and accessible to someone who is not taking the class?

Correctness: Are the explanations of technical terms, theories and arguments correct? Are the theories and arguments ascribed to the right philosophers?

Originality: Are there original cases, objections, or replies?

Relevance: Are there information, theses, cases, or arguments that are irrelevant to address the prompt? Is the paper lacking explanation of a relevant theory, thesis, case, or argument?

Structure: Does the paper have a clear structure, with introduction and conclusion? Are the theses, cases, and arguments presented in an organized way?

NOTE: While there is no evaluation criterion for grammar or typos, they may affect the grade if they are severe enough to compromise understanding. So, before submitting your paper or take home exam, make sure to ask a friend to proof read besides proof reading the paper yourself. Also take note of campus resources listed below that offer assistance with essay-writing.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

I take academic dishonesty in any form very seriously: I will prosecute any offenses, seeking penalties ranging up to and including expulsion from the university. The university's Academic guide to Integrity is available online: <http://judicialaffairs.sa.ucsb.edu/PDF/academicintegflyer.pdf>. It is every student's responsibility to be familiar with the university's policies. If you see anything there that you don't understand please contact me.

STUDENT SUPPORT AND CAMPUS RESOURCES

If you are facing a major medical or another major difficulty that is keeping you from doing well in the class, contact me as soon as you can. I am happy to work with you to find the best course of action and, if possible, to help you complete the course successfully. But I can't help if you don't let me know about your circumstances as soon as they arise.

** Please, don't wait until after the final exam to let me know about your circumstances. At that point there is virtually nothing we can do to accommodate you.**

1) **CAPS** (*Counseling & Psychological Services*)

If you're dealing with depression, anxiety, or are just feeling overwhelmed, CAPS is available to help. They offer individual and group counseling, as well as relaxation rooms and other resources to make the quarter more bearable.

- tel: (805) 893-4411
- <http://counseling.sa.ucsb.edu>

2) **CARE** (*Campus Advocacy Resources & Education*)

CARE provides resources related to sexual assault, stalking, and intimate partner violence. They offer free and confidential counseling, medical and legal assistance, and help with referrals for long-term support for those who need it.

- tel: (805) 893-4613
- <http://wgse.sa.ucsb.edu/Care>

3) **RCSGD** (*Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity*)

The RCSGD provides resources for gender, sexual, romantic minorities such as: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, asexual, intersex, and otherwise gender/sexual/romantic nonconforming individuals.

They also collect reports of hate incidents and maintain a list of gender neutral bathrooms on campus.

- tel: (805) 893-5847
- <http://wgse.sa.ucsb.edu/sgd/>

4) **CLAS** (*Campus Learning Assistance Services*)

CLAS offers workshops on study skills like note-taking and time management; group tutorials on math, science, and economics; assistance with essay-writing, and other free services that will help you perform well in your classes.

- <http://clas.sa.ucsb.edu>

5) **DSP** (*Disabled Students Program*)

If you have any sort of disability - physical or mental, permanent or temporary – we strongly encourage you to register with DSP. They can then notify your instructors if you need certain accommodations during classes or during tests.

A disability can be something like difficulty seeing or hearing; difficulty attending class due to physical or emotional distress; chronic anxiety or depression; or anything else that interferes with your schoolwork.

There's no shame in seeking help for these sorts of things, but unfortunately UCSB requires that instructors receive confirmation from DSP before providing accommodation. Since DSP is often busy, contact them as soon as possible if you need or expect to need their support.

- tel: (805) 893-2668
- <http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu>