

PHIL 160: Introduction to Ethics

Summer Session II 2016

MTWRF 1:15-2:45 PM

Caldwell Hall 103

Instructor:

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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3-4 PM, or by appointment

Course Description

What does it take to live a good life? What are our moral obligations to others? What makes an action morally right or wrong? And what does it mean for an action to be morally right or wrong in the first place? These are some of the questions we will tackle in this course. In doing so, we will read and discuss both classic texts in ethics from philosophers such as Plato, Kant and Mill, and contemporary work from Russ Shafer-Landau, Peter Singer, Bernard Williams, Susan Wolf, and others.

Class meetings will proceed through a mix of lecture and discussion, and participation will be a significant component of the course. The course will be appropriate both as an introduction to philosophical thought for students who have not yet taken a philosophy course, and for students who have already studied some philosophy and are interested in learning more about moral philosophy.

Course Requirements

Five short papers (600-800 words each): 50%

In-class final exam: 25%

Participation: 20%

In-class written responses: 5%

1. Five short papers

Each course at UNC must include at least 10 pages of written work. The written work in this course will take the form of a short paper assignment each week. These five papers (600-800 words each) are to be submitted to the instructor via email, by 11:59 PM on the following dates:

Paper 1: Friday, June 24th

Paper 2: Friday, July 1st

Paper 3: Friday, July 8th

Paper 4: Friday, July 15th
Paper 5: Friday, July 22nd

Prompts and further instructions for each paper will be handed out in class at least two class periods prior to the due date. Each is worth 10% of the course grade.

Late papers: Each student will be given one “free late day,” to be used once in the course, whenever he or she requests it. Otherwise, unless special permission is obtained from the instructor **at least 24 hours before the due date**, late papers will not be accepted without a penalty. Permission will only be given in the event of unforeseen circumstances that prevent the student from completing the paper on time. In the event of such circumstances, the student is responsible for providing suitable documentation to the instructor. When a paper is turned in late without prior permission from the instructor, $\frac{1}{3}$ of a letter grade will be deducted from that paper’s grade for each calendar day that the paper is late.

Plagiarism: The UNC Instrument of Student Governance defines plagiarism as “deliberate or reckless representation of another’s words, thoughts, or ideas as one’s own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise.” All students are expected to adhere to the UNC Honor Code, and plagiarism will be punished as severely as the university allows.

In general, using anyone else’s words in papers will be discouraged in this course. If quoting from assigned readings is necessary in a paper, all quotations must appear in quotation marks, and an internal citation (such as a footnote or endnote) indicating their source must be provided in a standard format. It is also a form of plagiarism to closely paraphrase text from an external source, changing a few of the words but imitating the sentence/paragraph structure of the external source. Text that appears outside of quotation marks in a paper must be the student’s own words, and those words must be presented within the student’s own organizational and sentential structure.

In addition, plagiarism can be committed non-deliberately; if one is reckless in one’s use of other people’s words or ideas, then one has committed plagiarism even if one did not intend to do so. In borderline cases, students should err on the side of consulting the instructor, instead of hoping that they are not committing plagiarism. Students should also contact the instructor with any other questions or concerns about plagiarism-related issues.

2. Final exam

The final exam (worth 25% of the course grade) will be administered on **Tuesday, July 26th, from 11:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m.** The final exam will be cumulative, covering material from throughout the course. Detailed information about the format of the final exam will be provided at least one week before the date of the exam.

3. Participation

Because philosophical discussion is essential to understanding course material, participation will be a significant component of the course (20% of the course grade). Students are expected to carefully read the material assigned for each class in advance and arrive prepared to participate in discussions of that material. Although attendance is required, even perfect attendance is not sufficient for an A-grade in participation. Students must not only attend class but regularly make valuable contributions to class discussions in order to earn an A in participation. Other forms of participation, such as attending office hours, will also be taken into consideration.

Students who feel that regular participation in group discussions will not be possible for them should contact the instructor with their concerns. Alternative methods of participation will be accommodated for such students to the best of the instructor's ability.

4. In-class written responses

At the start of each class, students will be asked to complete brief written responses to the assigned reading(s) for that class. These written responses will be worth 5% of the course grade. Each student's three lowest grades on these assignments will be dropped, including grades of "0." Students who miss in-class written responses due to lateness or absence will not be permitted to make them up. The purpose of the course policy of dropping the three lowest grades on the responses is to provide leeway for a reasonable number of absences while also incentivizing attendance.

Required Text

Each student is required to have a hard copy of the following textbook:

Shafer-Landau, Russ (2014). "The Fundamentals of Ethics," 3rd edition. Oxford University Press.

This textbook is available from the UNC student stores (store.unc.edu) and from other textbook sellers such as Amazon.com.

Other readings will be made available on the course's Sakai site under "Resources."

Course Schedule

This schedule is subject to revision. Readings may be added, removed and/or adjusted at the instructor's discretion. Any such changes will be announced both in class and via e-mail. Otherwise, students should come to class each day having read the reading assigned for that day.

Date	Agenda	Assignments
Unit I: Introduction, and the Nature of Morality		
Monday, 6/20	Shafer-Landau (RSL), "Introduction" Pryor, "Guidelines on Reading Philosophy" Pryor, "What is an Argument?"	
Tuesday, 6/21	Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"	Paper 1 assigned
Wednesday, 6/22	RSL Chapter 7, "Psychological Egoism" RSL Chapter 8, "Ethical Egoism"	
Thursday, 6/23	RSL Chapter 19, "Ethical Relativism" RSL Chapter 21, "Eleven Arguments Against Moral Objectivity" (selections)	
Friday, 6/24	Enoch, "Why I am an Objectivist about Ethics"	
Unit II: Utilitarianism and Kantianism		
Monday, 6/27	RSL Chapter 9, "Consequentialism: Its Nature and Attractions" Mill, "Utilitarianism" (selections)	Paper 1 due
Tuesday, 6/28	RSL Chapter 10, "Consequentialism: Its Difficulties" Thomson, "The Trolley Problem"	Paper 2 assigned
Wednesday, 6/29	RSL Chapter 11, "The Kantian Perspective: Fairness and Justice" Kant, "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals" (selections)	
Thursday, 6/30	RSL Chapter 12, "The Kantian Perspective: Autonomy and Respect" Kant, "Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals" (selections)	
Friday, 7/1	Scheffler, "Agent-Centered Restrictions, Rationality, and the Virtues"	
Unit III: Character and Virtue		
Monday, 7/4	Independence Day [no new reading]	
Tuesday, 7/5	Williams, "Persons, Character, and Morality"	Paper 2 due
Wednesday, 7/6	Wolf, "Moral Saints"	Paper 3 assigned
Thursday, 7/7	RSL Chapter 17, "Virtue Ethics"	

	Aristotle, "Nichomachean Ethics" (selections)	
Friday, 7/8	Hirji, "What's Aristotelian About Neo-Aristotelian Virtue Ethics?"	
Unit IV: The Good Life		
Monday, 7/11	Plato, "Republic" (selections)	Paper 3 due
Tuesday, 7/12	RSL Chapter 1 "Hedonism"	
Wednesday, 7/13	RSL Chapter 2 "Is Happiness All That Matters?" Nozick "The Experience Machine"	Paper 4 assigned
Thursday, 7/14	Wolf, "Meaningfulness: A Third Dimension of the Good Life"	
Friday, 7/15	Barnes, "Valuing Disability, Causing Disability"	
Unit V: Ethics and Sociality		
Monday, 7/18	Nefsky, "Collective Harm and the Inefficacy Problem"	Paper 4 due
Tuesday, 7/19	Frye, "Oppression"	Paper 5 assigned
Wednesday, 7/20	Nussbaum "Objectification"	
Thursday, 7/21	Dougherty, "Sex, Lies, and Consent"	
Friday, 7/22	Course wrap-up [no new reading]	
Tuesday, 7/26 11:30 AM-2:30 PM	In-class final exam (review session to be scheduled beforehand)	Remember to bring a blue book and something to write with!