

Ethics

Philosophy 320

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Office Hours: Tuesday 2:30 – 4:30, Thursday 9:00 – 11:00, and by appointment.

I. Required Texts:

Julia Driver, *Ethics: The Fundamentals*
Russ Shafer-Landau and Terence Cuneo, *Foundations of Ethics*
Selected photocopied readings

II. Purpose:

Ethical theory or moral philosophy covers a broad range of questions and issues. We might say, however, that two questions are central: “What is right and wrong?” and “How does one lead a good life?” In addition to addressing these questions this class will also cover questions in metaethics or foundational issues of ethical theory. One example of a metaethical question is the basic question of moral epistemology, “How can we come to know the truth of a moral claim?”

III. Grading:

Quizzes	40%
Term Paper	30%
Final Exam	30%

Daily Quizzes: You will have a quiz over each of your reading assignments. After we discuss the readings in class you will have 24 hours to log on to Moodle and take a quiz consisting of 5 true/false questions. You can review your notes and/or the readings before you take the quiz, but you should put all material away before you take the quiz. During the quiz you should consult no references other than your memory. This is an essential part of the course and your ability to learn the course material. You should take the quiz even if you miss class. Except for extraordinary circumstances, make up quizzes will not be given. I will, however, drop your lowest two quizzes.

Final Exam: The final will be 50% essay and 50% true/false. The essay questions will be provided before the test to encourage you to focus your study on the central issues and to encourage you to study with other students. I encourage group studying because students often learn philosophical ideas best through dialogue. The true/false questions will be based on quiz questions from earlier in the term.

Term Paper: A requirement for this course is that you write a term paper on one of the questions addressed in your readings. The paper should be approximately five single spaced pages. The first step is to prepare for a conference with me on your paper. The conference will take about 20 minutes in my office. Before you come to the conference you should be prepare the following: (1) your thesis, (2) a bibliography of the sources that you will discuss in your paper, (3) the basic argument that you will use to defend your thesis, and (4) a description of what you consider to be the strongest argument against your thesis. The conference will be a discussion where we can hopefully refine your thesis and argument, as well as consider whether there are any additional sources that your paper should address.

When I grade your final paper I will consider the following criteria:

A. Organization and Clarity:

Your paper should have one clear, precise sentence for your thesis.

Your thesis should be the last sentence of your first paragraph.

Your thesis should clearly limit the scope of your discussion.

Your thesis should defend a position.

Your thesis should be the organizing idea for your paper.

The introductory paragraph should provide a context making it easier for the reader/listener to understand the significance of your thesis.

The topic sentences of your supporting paragraphs should provide reasons why the reader/listener should accept your thesis.

The body of each supporting paragraph should provide reasons why the reader/listener should believe the topic sentence of that paragraph.

Avoid awkwardly phrased sentences.

Avoid spelling and grammatical errors.

B. Description of the Text:

References to the text should be accurate and not mislead.

You should strive to make the ideas in the text as easy to understand as possible.

You should not ignore sources relevant to the defense of your thesis.

C. Argument:

Your arguments should not assume the wrong audience.

Because the members of your audience are diverse, you should not presume that they hold specific religious or ideological views.

Give the reader a sense of why someone might disagree with your thesis and show the reader why these reasons are unpersuasive.

Late term papers are penalized as follows:

Up to 24 hours – half a letter grade

24 to 48 hours – one letter grade

48 to 72 hours – two letter grades

Assignments turned in after 72 hours receive a failing grade.

I will sometimes grant brief extensions, but you must request the extension at least two business days before the assignment is due.

Participation: You are expected to come to class and participate in classroom discussion. Excellent participation may raise your final grade and poor participation (including excessive absences and a failure to participate in discussion) may lower your final grade.

IV. Schedule:

A. Normative Ethics

Week 1: Sep 26 - 28

Wed: Introduction

Fri: Driver, "Introduction" and "The Challenge of Moral Universalism;" Martha Nussbaum, "Judging Other Cultures: The Case of Genital Mutilation."

Week 2: Oct 1 - 5

Mon: Driver, "God and Human Nature;" Philip Quinn, "God and Morality."

Wed: Driver, "Classical Utilitarianism;" Derek Parfit "The Repugnant Conclusion," and "The Absurd Conclusion."

Fri: *No Class*

Week 3: Oct 8 - 12

Mon: Driver, "Contemporary Consequentialism," Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality."

Wed: Driver, "Kantian Ethics;" Rae Langton, "Maria von Herbert's Challenge to Kant."

Fri: Driver, "Social Contract Theory;" Mary Midgley, "Duties Concerning Islands."
Lecture – James Hughes, "We Can be Smarter and Happier: The Future of Cognitive Enhancement," Wriston Auditorium, 7 p.m.

Week 4: Oct 15 - 19

Mon: Driver, "Intuitionism;" Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Trolley Problem."

Wed: Driver, "Virtue Ethics;" John Doris, "Character and Consistency" and "Moral Character, Moral Behavior."

Fri: Driver, "Feminist Ethics;" Alison Jaggar, "Toward a Feminist Conception of Moral Reasoning."

Week 5: Oct 22 - 26

Mon: Joshua Greene, et al., "An fMRI Investigation of Emotional Engagement in Moral Judgment;" Jorge Moll, et al., "Morals and the human brain: a working model;" Michael Koenigs, Liane Young, et al., "Damage to the prefrontal cortex increases utilitarian moral judgments."

B. Metaethics

Wed: Driver, "Moral Nihilism," Shafer-Landau and Cuneo, "Moral Error Theories Introduction," John Mackie, "The Subjectivity of Values," Richard Joyce, "The Myth of Morality"

Fri: Shafer-Landau and Cuneo, "Expressivism Introduction," A. J. Ayer, "Critique of Ethics and Theology," Simon Blackburn, "How To Be an Ethical Anti-Realist."

Week 6: Oct 29 - Nov 2

Mon: Shafer-Landau and Cuneo, "Constructivism Introduction," Christine Korsgaard, "The Authority of Reflection," Roderick Firth, "Ethical Absolutism and the Ideal Observer"

Wed: Shafer-Landau and Cuneo, "Sensibility Theories Introduction," John McDowell, "Values and Secondary Qualities," David Wiggins, "A Sensible Subjectivism?"

Fri: *Reading Period*

Week 7: Nov 5 - 9

Mon: Shafer-Landau and Cuneo, "Moral Realism Introduction," Richard Boyd, "How to Be a Moral Realist," Peter Railton,

“Moral Realism”
Wed: Jean Hampton, “The Authority of Reason,” Russ Shafer-Landau, “Ethics as Philosophy: A Defense of Ethical Nonnaturalism”
Fri: Shafer-Landau and Cuneo, “Moral Motivation Introduction,” Michael Smith, “The Externalist Challenge,” Nick Zangwill, “Externalist Moral Motivation”

Week 8: Nov 12 – 16

Mon: Shafer-Landau and Cuneo, “Moral Reasons Introduction,” Philippa Foot, “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives,” Bernard Williams, “Internal and External Reasons”
Wed: Christine Korsgaard, “Skepticism about Practical Reason,” Russ Shafer-Landau “Moral Reasons”
Fri: Paper Conferences (no class)

Week 9: Nov 19 – 23

Mon: Paper Conferences (no class)
Wed: *Thanksgiving*
Fri: *Thanksgiving*

Week 10: Nov 26 – 30

Mon: Shafer-Landau and Cuneo, “Moral Explanations Introduction,” Gilbert Harman, “Ethics and Observation,” Nicholas Sturgeon, “Moral Explanations,” Terence Cuneo “Moral Facts as Configuring Causes.”
Wed: Shafer-Landau and Cuneo, “Moral Disagreement Introduction,” Charles Stevenson, “The Nature of Ethical Disagreement,” David Brink “Moral Disagreement”
Fri: Shafer-Landau and Cuneo, “Moral Knowledge Introduction,” Norman Daniels, “Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics”

Week 11: Dec 3 – 7

Mon: Robert Audi, “Intuitionism, Pluralism, and the Foundations of Ethics,” Margaret Olivia Little, “Seeing and Caring: The Role of Affect in Feminist Moral Epistemology.”
Wed: Shafer-Landau and Cuneo, “Semantic Puzzles Introduction,” G. E. Moore, “The Subject-Matter of Ethics,” Simon Blackburn, “Attitudes and Contents”
Thurs: Turn in term papers by 11 a.m.
Fri: Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, “Expressivism and Embedding,” Terry Horgan and Mark Timmons, “New Wave Moral Realism Meets Moral Twin Earth.”

Final Exam: Wednesday, December 12, 8:30 a.m.