**PL 3433-01: Ethical Theory**

Lipscomb University, Spring 2020

TR, 11:55am-1:10pm

Ezell 107

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Office Hours: TR, 1:10-3:10pm

**Catalog Description:**

A survey of major theories in the history of moral philosophy. Includes works from philosophers such as Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Mill, and contemporary moral philosophers. (This course satisfies an Exploration-HPP Content Area Requirement, and/or an Elective Bible Requirement, and/or an Honors College Requirement.)

**Course Overview:**

This course is a critical inquiry into questions concerning basic notions of good and evil, right and wrong, virtue and vice, duty, justice, and obligation. Through a careful and critical examination of some of the most influential moral theories, this course aims to enable students to identify and constructively analyze ethical issues, develop critical thinking with respect to normative questions, evaluate their own moral intuitions, and reflect on what constitutes morality and the good life. Readings for this course will be drawn from classical and contemporary sources.

**Course in Relation to the University’s Faith-Based Mission:**

According to the university’s mission statement, Lipscomb University’s “primary mission is to integrate Christian faith and practice with academic excellence.” Ethical theory deals with how we should live and how we ought and ought not behave. To the extent that Christians are called to lead moral lives, systematic reflection on what morality actually entails is absolutely *sine* *qua* *non*. And, in general, the more mature we are philosophically, the better equipped we are to seek the truth about morality and to pursue excellence in our thinking and, in turn, in our behavior. Accordingly, my hope and expectation is that, when we have grown in our ability to reflect upon the nature of morality, we will be better equipped and motivated to love others as ourselves.

**Course Objectives:**

Students completing this course successfully will be able to do the following:

**CO-1**: Interpret and comprehend important primary texts in the history of moral philosophy;

**CO-2:** Explain key arguments and objections of some major moral philosophers and schools of thought;

**CO-3:** Reconstruct arguments contained in course readings, critically assess the strengths and weaknesses of

those arguments, and develop arguments of their own;

**CO-4:** Relate ethical theory to salient issues.

**CO-5:** Clearly communicate philosophical positions and arguments, both in written and oral form;

**Required Texts:**

James Rachels and Stuart Rachels. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy.* 7th Edition. (McGraw-Hill, 2012).

Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. *The Classical Utilitarians: Bentham and Mill.* Edited and introduced by

John Troyer (Hackett, 2003)

Immanuel Kant. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of* *Morals*. 3rd Ed., with *On a Supposed Right to Lie because of*

*Philanthropic Concerns*, Translated by James W. Ellington (Hackett, 1993)

Aristotle. *Nicomachean* *Ethics*. Translated and introduced by C. D. C. Reeve (Hackett, 2014)

Various reading materials posted online

**Course Requirements & Assignments:**

In addition to reading assigned material and participating in class discussions, students will write **two papers** on ethical theory and engage in a **group research project and formal presentation** on some salient issue in applied ethics.. (See below for the guidelines on the paper assignments and the group research projects/presentations). Additionally, students will keep a **reading journal.** This journal will be a separate notebook in which students will outline the central argument for each assigned reading, as well as record any questions/comments concerning that argument or related material.

**Evaluation: Grading Scale:**

Paper #1 = 27.5% of total grade **A** = 100 – 90

Paper #2 = 27.5% of total grade **B** = 89 – 80

Final Project & Presentation = 30% of total grade **C** = 79 – 70

Reading Journal = 5% of total grade **D** = 69 – 60

Participation/Attendance = 10% of total grade **F** = < 60

**Course Format:**

This course will be a combination of lecture, question and answer, and class discussion. Lectures will generally occupy the first segment of each class as a way of providing the basic conceptual shape to the course and as a way of providing a springboard for informed class discussion and collective analysis of the arguments contained in the texts. We will take seriously the idea of rigorous (but civil!) intellectual engagement and group deliberation. Accordingly, each student is expected to have read the material assigned for each class date, to have considered any questions or comments one may want to pose, and to be ready to engage critically the ideas covered in the reading and/or lectures. Insofar as group deliberation tends to yield epistemic outcomes that outshine the results of solitary inquiry, students are expected to participate in discussion as a sort of civic obligation owed to fellow classmates in pursuit of truth. Class participation and attendance will count toward your final course grade.

**Attendance & Participation:**

Regular class attendance is mandatory for all students at Lipscomb University. More than two (2) unexcused absences will adversely affect the participation/attendance component of the final course grade. Any student who misses the equivalent of three weeks of class may be dropped from this course and must petition the department chair for reinstatement; if the student is not reinstated, the student will receive an “F” for the course. Classroom behavior that interferes with either the instructor’s ability to conduct the class or the ability of other students to benefit from the class is *unacceptable* and will adversely affect one’s course grade. Examples include: routinely entering class late or departing early; violating the stated technology policy (see below); repeatedly talking in class without being recognized; talking while other are speaking; and intentionally maintaining a disruptive presence in the class.

**Late Policy:**

No late papers/assignments will be accepted. No make-up exams will be offered, except in rare cases with prior approval.

**Technology Policy:**

The use of laptops, iPads, Kindles, handheld PCs, cell phones, and/or other technological devices will be strictly prohibited during class unless otherwise approved by the instructor.

**Academic Integrity & Honor Code:**

This course is governed by a strict code of honor, and remaining in this course implies consent to an agreement of sorts between the student and instructor. Anything turned into to the instructor should be the original work of the individual student, unless otherwise specified. Students must cite any and all sources used. Please use Chicago style *footnotes* and, also, be sure to include a list of all references in a bibliography. (For more information, see www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\_citationguide.html.) Students may refer all questions concerning citation or plagiarism to the instructor. The following is an official statement from Lipscomb University concerning academic integrity:

*“In keeping with our identity as a Christian University and our goal to help shape lifelong disciples of Christ, academic integrity will be taken very seriously in this class. Unless specific permission is given to collaborate on assignments with other students, each student's work shall be his/her own. Cheating on exams or assignments and plagiarizing on written assignments will, depending on the severity of the case, result in penalties ranging from a significantly reduced grade on the assignment to failing the course. Instances of cheating or plagiarism may also be reported to appropriate members of the administration, depending on the situation. Decisions in these matters rest with the instructor. Please refer to the University’s Code of Conduct and Academic Integrity Policy.*”

**Accommodations for Disabilities:**

It is the policy of Lipscomb University to accommodate students with disabilities, pursuant to federal and state law. Therefore, any student with a documented disability who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the ACCESS Ability Program at the beginning of each semester. The ACCESS Ability office is located in the Academic Success Center, which can be reached by phone at 615.966.6301 or by email at accessability@lipscomb.edu.

**Dropping the Course:**

Please note that a decision to stop attending this class does *not* constitute an official dropping of the course. A drop/add form (available in the Registrar’s Office) must be signed by the instructor and processed by the Registrar’s Office before the drop is official. If your name appears on the roster at the time of grading and you have not officially dropped the course, a grade will be assigned to you on the basis of the policies outlined in this syllabus.

**Class Schedule Disruption Policy:**

Lipscomb University’s Class Schedule Disruption Policy can be reviewed at http://academics.lipscomb.edu. Except in the rarest of instances, Lipscomb University has not canceled classes or closed offices. In the event of a class schedule disruption that prevents a class from meeting at its normal location and/or time, students will be notified via email using their Lipscomb email account (or Canvas).

**Intellectual Property Notification**:

Course materials prepared by the instructor, together with the content of all lectures and review sessions presented by the instructor, are the intellectual property of the instructor.  Video and audio recording of lectures and review sessions without the consent of the instructor is prohibited.  Unless explicit permission is obtained from the instructor, recordings of lectures and review sessions may not be modified and must not be transferred or transmitted to any other person.

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| **Date** | **Reading & Assignment Schedule** |
| ***1/7*** | Course overview; go over syllabus  **NOTE**:   * Lecture on why we do immoral things |
| ***1/9*** | James Rachels & Stuart Rachels, Chap. 1, “What is Morality?”  **NOTE**:   * Lecture on some basic definitions and categories of normative moral philosophy and metaethics. |
|  | ***Relativism, Subjectivism, Emotivism, & Egoism*** |
| ***1/14*** | James Rachels & Stuart Rachels, chap. 2, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” |
| ***1/16*** | Alasdair MacIntyre, chap. 2 of *After Virtue* (online)  **NOTE**:   * Lecture on metaethical theories of subjectivism & emotivism |
| ***1/21*** | James Rachels & Stuart Rachels, Chap. 5, “Ethical Egoism”  **SUGGESTED READING**:   * Joel Feinberg, “Psychological Egoism” (online) |
|  | ***Utilitarianism*** |
| ***1/23*** | J. S. Mill, *Utilitarianism*  **NOTE:**   * It’s best if you go ahead and read all of Mill’s *Utilitarianism* in one sitting. At the least, read the first half for today and the second half for next class. |
| ***1/28*** | Cont’d |
| ***1/30*** | Cont’d |
| ***2/4*** | James Rachels & Stuart Rachels, Chap. 7, “The Utilitarian Approach” |
| ***2/6*** | James Rachels & Stuart Rachels, Chap. 8, “The Debate Over Utilitarianism”  **DUE**:   * **Your First Paper Is Due At The Beginning Of Class!** |
|  | ***Kantian Deontology*** |
| ***2/11*** | Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*  **NOTE:**   * Kant is a notoriously tough read—but don’t be discouraged or intimidated by this. Read at least the first half of the book for today and read the second half for next class. |
| ***2/13*** | Cont’d |
| ***2/18*** | Cont’d |
| ***2/20*** | James Rachels & Stuart Rachels, Chap. 9, “Are There Absolute Moral Rules?”  **NOTE:**   * We will be choosing topics for the research projects and assigning presentation groups. |
| ***2/25*** | James Rachels & Stuart Rachels, Chap. 10, “Kant and Respect for Persons” |
|  | ***Virtue Theory*** |
| ***2/27*** | Aristotle, *Nicomachean* *Ethics*, bk. 1 |
| ***3/3*** | Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, bk. 2 |
| ***3/5*** | James Rachels & Stuart Rachels, Chap. 12, “The Ethics of Virtue” |
|  | ***Natural Law Theory*** |
| ***3/10*** | Thomas Aquinas, “Treatise on the Law” [ST I-II, q.90-95] from *Summa Theologica*  (online)  **SUGGESTED READING**:   * J. Caleb Clanton & Kraig Martin, “Understanding Aquinas on Natural Law” |
| ***3/12*** | Cont’d  **NOTE:**   * Lecture emphasis on the principle of double effect. |
| ***3/17*** | Spring Break! |
| ***3/19*** | Spring Break! |
| ***3/24*** | Cont’d; additional reading assignment is TBA  **NOTE:**   * Lecture on problems with natural law theory, with emphasis on the is-ought problem and two responses.   **DUE**:   * **Your Second Paper Is Due At The Beginning Of Class!** |
|  | ***Divine Command Theory*** |
| ***3/26*** | Plato, *Euthyphro* (online)  **NOTE:**   * As you read, give special attention to the passage at Stephanus number 10a. The lecture will cover divine command theory, with special emphasis on the so-called arbitrariness problem. |
| ***3/31*** | James Rachels & Stuart Rachels, Chap. 4, “Does Morality Depend on Religion?” |
|  | ***Social Contract Theory*** |
| ***4/2*** | Thomas Hobbes, selections from *Leviathan*  (online) |
| ***4/7*** | John Rawls, excerpt from *A Theory of Justice*  (online) |
| ***4/9*** | Robert Nozick, “The Entitlement Theory”(online) |
|  | ***Applied Ethics Project Presentations*** |
| ***4/14*** | Group #1 Research Project Presentation – Reading TBA, depending on topic chosen by group |
| ***4/16*** | Group #2 Research Project Presentation – Reading TBA, depending on topic chosen by group |
| ***4/21*** | Group #3 Research Project Presentation – Reading TBA, depending on topic chosen by group |
| ***Tues.***  ***4/28*** | **THE OFFICIAL FINAL EXAM PERIOD @ 8am – 10am**  Group #4 Research Project Presentation – Reading TBA, depending on topic chosen by group  Group #5 Research Project Presentation – Reading TBA, depending on topic chosen by group  **NOTE:**   * You are required to be present during the final exam period!   **DUE:**   * **Your Reading Journals Will Be Due At This Time!** |

**Here’s How I’ll Calculate Your Participation/Attendance Grades**

**The Initial Baseline**

Effectively, you start out with a grade of **80**—but *that’s only where you begin*. That said, this *is* the final grade you can expect to receive at the end of the semester, if all of the following are true:

* you show up to every class meeting;
* you show up on time;
* you *never* contribute to class discussions; and
* you *never* do anything to earn a demerit from the initial baseline grade.

***From there***, your grade will be higher or lower, depending on the quality of your contribution to class discussions. In other words, you must *earn* a higher grade, and you can do things that will indeed lower your grade.

**What You Can Do to Earn a *Higher* Grade**

In order to earn a grade higher than the initial 80, you must participate—and participate *virtuously* and regularly—in class discussion. What that means is that you regularly do some or all of the following:

* you raise good questions;
* you further develop, or bring more clarity to, a point already made (when needed);
* you raise an objection to a position on offer (but always in turn and in a constructive manner);
* you offer a reasonable reply to an objection; or also
* you somehow demonstrate your preparedness for class

***Accordingly***:

* You can expect that your grade will be in the **80-90** range if (a) you consistently contribute meaningfully to the class discussions, (b) you always show up on time to every class, and (c) you avoid getting demerits.
* You can expect that your grade will be in the **90-100** range if (a) you stand out as an especially valuable participant in the class, (b) you always show up on time to every class, and (c) you avoid getting demerits.

**What You Can Do to *Lower* Your Grade**

There are several things you can do that will knock points off your final participation/attendance grades, no matter what you would have otherwise scored. Consider the following:

* You will be docked **5 points** for every absence beyond the two freebies allotted to you.
* You will be docked **2 points** for every time you are late to class.
* You will be docked **5 points** for every time you do something disruptive or speak out of turn or out of line. This includes being rude, being disruptively silly, whispering or chatting when others have the floor, texting, etc.

Exceptions to the first two rules will be made only in cases of medical or family emergencies that require you to be absent beyond the two freebies already allotted to you. (There are no exceptions to the third rule.)

***Accordingly:***

* Assume that because you regularly participate well in class discussions, you would have earned a grade of 90, were it not for all the demerits you’ve acquired along the way. However, because you’ve been late to class on three separate occasions, because you’ve been absent a total of three times (thus once beyond your allotted two freebies), and because you were disruptive during a class period, your final grade calculation looks like this: 90 -5 -2 -2 -2 -5 = **74**

**Here’s How I’ll Grade Your Term Papers**

The following items are things to which I will refer when grading your papers. Note that items 1-26 deal with positive standards that your paper should meet; items 26-36 deal with specific problems your paper should avoid. *Please note: if at any point one of the numbers below is marked in the margin of your graded paper, then there is some* ***failure*** *in your paper with regard to the corresponding item*. So, for example, if in the margin I write “6d,” then your paper has failed to defend adequately that particular premise in the argument of your paper. Or, if in the margin I write “27,” then your paper suffers from the problem of reading like a book report, when it should be doing more. Obviously, some of the items below are more important than others. Your paper’s final grade will ultimately depend on an evaluation of the intensity, frequency, and overall significance of the failures.

**re: Thesis**

1. It’s obvious what the paper’s thesis is, and it’s explicitly stated at the beginning of the paper.
2. The thesis states: a) what the author will be arguing; and b) how the author will go about arguing it. The thesis thereby acts as a sort of guide for the reader, briefly indicating what the reader can expect as he/she reads the paper.
3. The paper’s thesis fully satisfies the given assignment. For example, if the assignment is to answer certain questions, the thesis is an overt and direct response to those questions.
4. The paper’s thesis is significant and decisive. For example, if the assignment is to answer the question “What is knowledge?”, the thesis is not: “It’s hard to say what knowledge is, and there are lots of interesting things it might be.”
5. The thesis is stated in just a few sentences.

**re: Argument**

1. The argument in the paper is especially promising. For example:

**[a]** the paper makes no error in reasoning,

**[b]** the paper lays out all the important premises in the argument,

**[c]** the paper explains those premises when necessary,

**[d]** the paper defends them when necessary,

**[e]** the argument in the paper doesn’t rest on uncritical assumptions, and

**[f]** the paper handles all the notable objections and counterarguments.

1. The paper doesn’t make an assertion at a point where it should be offering an argument.
2. The paper doesn’t employ unnecessary and vicious rhetoric. Instead, the paper relies on the strength of the reasons and arguments given, not on the rhetoric employed.

**re: Organization, Writing & Execution**

1. The paper is well organized and structured in such a way that makes it easy to follow the argument throughout the entire paper.
2. The paper contains appropriate definitions of terms when necessary.
3. The paper doesn’t make a claim (or a set of claims) that stands in need of being fleshed out, explained, or further elaborated.
4. The paper is clear.
5. The paper is lucid enough, meaning that it’s easy enough to understand quickly.
6. The paper doesn’t contain unnecessarily highfalutin or complicated wording. (Smooth and simple wording is much better.)
7. The paper contains no unnecessary fluff, only meaty and significant claims.
8. Nothing in the paper is extraneous or distracting. In other words, the paper contains nothing that doesn’t strengthen its argument.
9. The paper contains no grammatical, spelling, or typographical errors.
10. The paper is polished, reflecting how carefully it was written, rewritten, and edited.

**re: Research, Citation & Format**

1. The paper displays a proper amount of outside research, consistent with the requirements of the given assignment.
2. The paper contains proper citations.
3. In the sentence(s) that immediately precede(s) each quotation, the paper briefly introduces the quotation. (Here’s an example: Richard Swinburne recognizes the significance of this point. He argues that “you should always introduce quoted material—it’s bad form to just toss a quote out there at random.”)
4. In the sentences that immediately follow each quotation, the paper explains what the quotation means, and the paper indicates how the quotation strengthens the paper’s argument.
5. The paper has a bibliography that is properly formatted and contains all of the relevant bibliographical data for all referenced material.
6. The paper is properly formatted.
7. The paper is no shorter and no longer than it’s supposed to be.

**re: Miscellaneous Problems**

1. Losing sight of the argument, the paper dissolves into stream of consciousness or strays off the topic.
2. The paper reads like a book report.
3. The paper reads like a summary of one’s class notes.
4. The paper shows some grasp of the material, but doesn’t do enough to engage the relevant problems.
5. The paper discusses the issues, but not in much depth.
6. The paper is too sloppy: it wasn’t edited or proofread well enough.
7. The paper falls far short of satisfying the assignment.
8. The paper seems to make no unified argument.
9. The paper makes a grave mistake in reporting what a text says.
10. The paper shows a profound lack of concern or effort.
11. The paper plagiarizes.

**About Paper Assignment #1**

**re: structure & logistics**

*Here are the requirements of the paper assignment...*

**(a)** Pick a question from the list below and respond to it. You are *not* free to do otherwise.

1. Write a **4-5 page paper.** (The page count does *not* include the bibliography.) Please number each of the pages. Please do *not* turn in anything longer than 5 pages.
2. Your paper should be **double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, using 12-point Times New Roman font**. Please staple your papers.
3. Use **Chicago Style footnotes**, and also include a complete bibliography at the end.
4. Make use of and cite at least **three (3) scholarly sources beyond the assigned readings.** Make sure that you include the complete bibliographical information in your bibliography.
5. In doing your research, start by looking at the relevant entries—and the corresponding bibliographies on those entries—at the online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, as well as *Philosopher’s Index* (which is available through the LU library webpage).
6. After you’ve written your paper, **edit it and polish it**. Then, have someone else read it. And then edit the paper again.
7. Be sure to consult the grading criteria on your syllabus as you edit the paper.
8. The paper is due at the beginning of class on ***FEBRUARY 6.***

**re: content**

As far as the substance of the paper is concerned...

1. After you pick the essay prompt you’re most interested in,
   1. ***Think*** about the issue at hand, do some *research*, and *decide which position* seems most sensible to you—and do this before you start writing!
   2. ***Explain*** what the controversy at hand is.
   3. ***Present the case for your position in the form of an argument****.* You should be able to summarize your argument in an outline form.
   4. After you lay out and explain your own argument, (a) consider one or more of the most obvious ***objections*** a critic might throw at your position, and (b) ***defend*** your position against those objections.
2. In addressing the essay prompt, your paper should be an *argumentative* in nature. In other words, your paper should *not* be a book report or a summary of your notes from class.
3. Your paper should state the *thesis* explicitly in the introduction. In other words, the first few sentences of your paper should read something like this...

In this paper, I reconstruct George Krinos’s account of prayer in order to determine whether, and the extent to which, it contributes either to current philosophical debates on petitionary prayer or to the practice of prayer among ordinary religious believers. The paper proceeds as follows. I begin with a brief explanation of how Krinos’s account of prayer emerges within the context of his general interpretation of religion as a form of poetry (**§1**), and then I explain why he rejects the view that petitionary prayer is materially efficacious (**§2**). Next, I outline the view of prayer that Krinos actually endorses, as well as what he takes to be the three potential benefits of prayer so understood (**§3**). In the penultimate section of the paper, I argue that Krinos’s criticism of the view that petitionary prayer is materially efficacious is internally inconsistent (**§4**). And ultimately, I argue that his preferred view of rational prayer is itself insufficiently motivated in light of the available alternatives (**§5**), and I respond to several objections to my thesis (**§6**).

**Essay Prompts for Paper Assignment #1**

1. First, briefly explain what ethical egoism (hereafter, EE) affirms. Second, carefully reconstruct James Rachels and Stuart Rachels’ case against EE. (Hint: The Rachels contend that EE is unacceptably arbitrary—but you’ll need to dissect and explain *how* they lay out this case in full.) Third, respond directly to their case against EE. How might one try to defend EE against their case? Could this line of defense be reasonably rejected by the Rachels? Why or why not?
2. Mill’s utilitarianism relies in part upon a distinction between various kinds of pleasures. First, briefly explain this distinction and why it matters for Mill. Second, explain Mill’s argument for thinking that certain pleasures are more valuable than others. Lastly, answer this: Is his account correct? If so why? If not, is there a way of reconstructing his account to make it stronger?
3. First, carefully explain the utilitarian view regarding suffering. Second, answer the following questions: Should we be vegetarians? Why or why not? (Make sure your answer adequately addresses the utilitarian view regarding suffering.)
4. Utilitarianism judges actions by looking at consequences—i.e., by look at what comes *after* the act. Do you think this presents utilitarianism with any problems, especially since one’s decision about how to act inevitably *precedes* the act, and hence that consequences according to which the act is to judged? Do you think there’s a way out of this problem for utilitarianism? If so, how? If not, why not?
5. Carefully reconstruct, and explain, Mill’s argument for the intrinsic value of happiness. Then criticize it. Is this a compelling argument at the end of the day? Why or why not?
6. One of the standard criticisms of utilitarianism is that, so it seems, there are things *other* than consequences that matter from a moral standpoint. First, carefully explain this criticism of utilitarianism, making use of some examples to illustrate the point. Second, explain how utilitarianism can be defended against this sort of criticism. Third, answer this question: Is *that* defense compelling to you? Why or why not.

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☐ I picked a question from the list and responded directly to it.

☐ My paper is 4-5 pages long, not including the bibliography

☐ My paper is double-spaced, has 1-inch margins, and uses 12-point Times New Roman font.

☐ I made use of, and properly cited, at least 3 sources beyond the assigned texts.

☐ I made use of *Stanford Encyclopedia*, Google Scholar, and/or *Philosopher’s Index* in my research.

☐ I edited my paper, and I had someone else read it as well.

☐ I consulted the professor’s grading criteria on the syllabus.

☐ Before I wrote my paper, I thought about the topic, did some research, and formulated my position.

☐ My paper explains the controversy at hand.

☐ My paper develops an argument.

☐ My paper explains my argument.

☐ My paper considers objections to my argument and responds to them.

☐ My paper doesn’t read like a book report or a summary of my class notes.

☐ The thesis of my paper reads like the one presented to me as a model.

☐ I used Chicago style for footnotes and bibliography entries.

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, do hereby affirm that I have not plagiarized or otherwise violated my honor.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**About Paper Assignment #2**

**re: structure & logistics**

*Here are the requirements of the paper assignment...*

**(a)** Pick a question from the list below and respond to it. You are *not* free to do otherwise.

1. Write a **5 page paper.** (The page count does *not* include the bibliography.) Please number each of the pages. Please do *not* turn in anything longer than 5 pages.
2. Your paper should be **double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, using 12-point Times New Roman font**. Please staple your papers.
3. Use **Chicago Style** footnotes, and also include a complete bibliography at the end.
4. Make use of and cite at least **three (3) scholarly sources beyond the assigned readings.** Make sure that you include the complete bibliographical information in your bibliography.
5. In doing your research, start by looking at the relevant entries—and the corresponding bibliographies on those entries—at the online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, as well as *Philosopher’s Index* (which is available through the LU library webpage).
6. After you’ve written your paper, **edit it and polish it**. Then, have someone else read it. And then edit the paper again.
7. Be sure to consult the grading criteria on your syllabus as you edit the paper.
8. The paper is due at the beginning of class on ***MARCH 24.***

**re: content**

As far as the substance of the paper is concerned...

1. After you pick the essay prompt you’re most interested in,
   1. ***Think*** about the issue at hand, do some *research*, and *decide which position* seems most sensible to you—and do this before you start writing!
   2. ***Explain*** what the controversy at hand is.
   3. ***Present the case for your position in the form of an argument****.* You should be able to summarize your argument in an outline form.
   4. After you lay out and explain your own argument, (a) consider one or more of the most obvious ***objections*** a critic might throw at your position, and (b) ***defend*** your position against those objections.
2. In addressing the essay prompt, your paper should be an *argumentative* in nature. In other words, your paper should *not* be a book report or a summary of your notes from class.
3. Your paper should state the *thesis* explicitly in the introduction. In other words, the first few sentences of your paper should read something like this...

In this paper, I reconstruct George Krinos’s account of prayer in order to determine whether, and the extent to which, it contributes either to current philosophical debates on petitionary prayer or to the practice of prayer among ordinary religious believers. The paper proceeds as follows. I begin with a brief explanation of how Krinos’s account of prayer emerges within the context of his general interpretation of religion as a form of poetry (**§1**), and then I explain why he rejects the view that petitionary prayer is materially efficacious (**§2**). Next, I outline the view of prayer that Krinos actually endorses, as well as what he takes to be the three potential benefits of prayer so understood (**§3**). In the penultimate section of the paper, I argue that Krinos’s criticism of the view that petitionary prayer is materially efficacious is internally inconsistent (**§4**). And ultimately, I argue that his preferred view of rational prayer is itself insufficiently motivated in light of the available alternatives (**§5**), and I respond to several objections to my thesis (**§6**).

**Essay Prompts for Assignment #2**

1. First, briefly explain a instrumentalist/utilitarian theory of punishment. Second, explain what you take to be the most pressing Kantian objection to that theory of punishment. Third, respond to the following questions: Is there a way that the Kantian objection can be suitably deflected? If so, how? If not, what is the best way of providing a workable theory of punishment? Explain.

1. Carefully explain G.E.M. Anscombe’s (=Elizabeth Anscombe’s) famous objection to Kant’s deontology. Can her objection help strengthen our understanding of Kant’s categorical imperative? If so, explain how. Or, does her objection illustrate some insurmountable problem with the categorical imperative? If so, explain how.
2. Do you think it is ever morally permissible to bear false witness—say, for example, when doing so would yield extremely beneficial consequences or prevent catastrophe? Why or why not? Explain how your answer to this question affects the plausibility of either Kant’s deontology ***or*** divine command theory ***or*** natural law theory.
3. First, briefly explain what divine command theory (hereafter, DCT) says. Second, carefully explain James and Stuart Rachels’ case for thinking that DCT makes all ethical norms arbitrary. (Hint: You’ll need to flesh out this case a bit because they don’t *fully* explain it.) Third, respond directly to the Rachels’ case against DCT. Do you think there is any way of defending DCT against their concern? Or, are they right to think that DCT renders all ethical norms arbitrary? Explain your view and argue for your conclusion.
4. First, briefly explain natural law theory (hereafter, NLT) and show how it relates to the view that there is a teleological purposefulness of things in nature. Second, what do you think is the most problematic element of NLT and why? Third, do you think there is a way of modifying NLT to circumvent this problem? Explain.

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☐ I picked a question from the list and responded directly to it.

☐ My paper is 4-5 pages long, not including the bibliography

☐ My paper is double-spaced, has 1-inch margins, and uses 12-point Times New Roman font.

☐ I made use of, and properly cited, at least 3 sources beyond the assigned texts.

☐ I made use of *Stanford Encyclopedia*, Google Scholar, and/or *Philosopher’s Index* in my research.

☐ I edited my paper, and I had someone else read it as well.

☐ I consulted the professor’s grading criteria on the syllabus.

☐ Before I wrote my paper, I thought about the topic, did some research, and formulated my position.

☐ My paper explains the controversy at hand.

☐ My paper develops an argument.

☐ My paper explains my argument.

☐ My paper considers objections to my argument and responds to them.

☐ My paper doesn’t read like a book report or a summary of my class notes.

☐ The thesis of my paper reads like the one presented to me as a model.

☐ I used Chicago style for footnotes and bibliography entries.

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, do hereby affirm that I have not plagiarized or otherwise violated my honor.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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**About the Group Research & Presentation Project:**

Groups should think of this presentation project as *their* *turn* to teach the rest of the class about something very important. You should take yourselves seriously as scholars and approach this presentation assignment with the gravity of, say, a job interview. (Kidding around, being silly, uninformed, etc. will adversely affect your grade on this assignment.) This project is worth 30% of your total course grade, so it should be treated as seriously as a term paper.

*Here’s what’s required of each group:*

1. Each group must do **substantial outside research** on the applied ethical issue in question. Groups should normally consult a variety of scholarly sources (say, 10-15), making use of Philosopher’s Index and Google Scholar. Groups can expect that the instructor will assign several key texts to be considered.
2. Each group must give a **40 minute presentation on the issue**, making sure to follow each of the guidelines below. Presentations should be rehearsed and timed out to precisely 40 minutes (or as close as you can get within reason). Going too long or not long enough will hurt your score. During those 40 minutes, each of the group members should do a fair share of the talking. Following the formal presentation, the group will entertain questions and criticism from the rest of the class.
3. Each group should produce a very **polished, detailed, and easy to follow handout for the presentation**. This document will be used as an outline and listener’s guide by the rest of the class. It should include a bibliography of all sources consulted/cited.
4. Presentations should do the following:
   1. ***Explain what the heart of the ethical issue is***. Why is this particular issue so controversial? Provide relevant historical/conceptual background information. Groups are expected to make use of actual, interesting, and illuminating case studies, if and when relevant, to provide concrete basis for explanation and argumentation.
   2. As clearly and as charitably as possible, ***explain—premise by premise—the strongest argument(s) on both (or all) sides of the issue****.* So, for instance, if a group is discussing abortion, that group should provide the strongest possible argument to the effect that abortion is morally permissible *and* the strongest possible argument that it is immoral.
   3. ***Carefully and critically assess each of the arguments*** *in 4b* by considering the strongest objections to these arguments.
   4. ***Determine which of the arguments is the strongest according to your group and explain why you take it to be the strongest*.** What conclusion does this yield with respect to the issue? Make sure that your conclusion is qualified and not vague. If the group is able to come to a consensus, take a position on this issue.
   5. ***If the group is unable to come to an overall consensus view, explain why***. What are the grounds for your disagreement? In other words, explain what it is you differ on and why you think the

other(s) is wrong.

1. Groups are expected to work on this project *together*, not just break the assignment into “even” pieces.
2. Also, each member of the group should turn in a separate sheet with a paragraph briefly detailing and evaluating the contribution and performance of each of the members of the group (including oneself). In general, each member of the group will receive the same grade. However, if fellow group members consistently evaluate a particular individual student poorly, the instructor reserves the right to adjust that individual’s grade accordingly.

*The following are the criteria by which groups will be graded on this assignment.*

* Manifest understanding of the ethical issue and background research 20%
* Reconstruction and analysis of the arguments, pro and con 20%
* Sophistication of the conclusion and strength of argument in support 20%
* Precision, clarity, and helpfulness of “listener’s guide” 20%
* Overall clarity, preparedness, presentation 20%