

HI EVERYONE, AND WELCOME TO PHIL 134!

I am Elizabeth, and you can also call me Dr. Sonnier. Please, no *Mrs. Sonnier*. *Sonnier* is not the last name of my husband.

Philosophy 134 is a completely online course. We will be using Canvas.

You will be able to access the course starting at 4:01 a.m. of the first day of class, not before. If you add late, it may take a day or so before you are added to the 134 course shell in Canvas.

Logging Into Canvas

Canvas Login URL: <https://sjsu.instructure.com>

Username : your SJSU 9-digit ID

Password: your MySJSU password

Accessing Your Course

Once logged into Canvas you should see your course or courses listed in " Courses". The " Courses" tab will display all of your courses that have been activated by your instructor(s). Click on the course name and you will be entered into the course's home page.

NEED HELP LOGGING ON AFTER FIRST DAY OF CLASS?

Contact the University Help Desk (CLARK HALL) for technical support issues, including: password reset, browser problems, and issues encountered in Canvas courses.

Phone: (408) 924-1530

If you click on one of the subjects below, you will go directly to that subject in this document

HOME PAGE

CONTENT OF WEEKLY TABLES

TECHNICAL OR CANVAS DESIGN ISSUES

GENERAL INFO ABOUT THE COURSE

134 INTRODUCTION & GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

There will be no required orientation meeting for this class, since most of you are Computer Science majors, you should have no problem. But non-Computer Science majors do as well as.

This course should be easy to navigate. If you happened upon this class merely for its convenience, this Welcome Page will be your place for instruction about using this course design, &/or if you are confused, you are directed back here if you ask and seem not to have read this.

COURSE DESIGN

Everything you might need to do for each week will be right on the Homepage.

This course is designed such that you will need the whole screen across in widescreen.

HOMEPAGE

The Homepage is your hub for most everything in this course. I add all components that I can to the Home Page but I cannot add a link to Email.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

On the Homepage you will see writing at the top, going all the way across. This is where I give you news.

All important announcements will be made at the top of the homepage because I am taking no chances that you might miss the announcements, so always read there. I do not use the standard pop-up Announcements feature.

QUESTIONS

To the right, directly below Announcements, you will see an icon for Questions. Click that to ask me questions instead of asking in email, because others may be seeking the same answers, and this way they get to share. This is a link to a discussion topic, Questions About Whatever.

WEEKLY WORK

Most possible materials you will need to do this course will be in a table directly below Announcements on the Homepage so that each week you will find what you need at the top. If you just use the Weekly Work table each week, you should do fine because Notes, necessary Readings for assignments, actual Instructions, links to Discussions & Exams, will be in that top table.

We are on a Monday to Sunday schedule. I set assignment Results due on Sundays at midnight because doing coursework on weekends seems to best accommodate all of your schedules. If you have a team member for whom this is a problem, let me know & we can work around that problem. Some discussion Topics (parts of a Discussion Assignment) are due different days of the week.

FUTURE WEEKS

The tables for each future week are linked directly below the current week.

PAST WEEKS

As a week is past, I will link to its table so you can refer back to previous work for the course. The tables for each past week are linked directly below Future Weeks.

OUR COURSE TOOLS

Below past weeks, you will find the table for WEEK 1. This table contains essential course tools:

OUR COURSE CALENDAR (DATES)

The Dates file lists weekly dates, assignments, percentage points, and readings for the semester. **Please pay attention to Our Course Calendar.** Here you can find how many points for each due assignment.

GREENSHEETS

For those of you new to SJSU, green sheets are SJSU syllabi. This is where you will find the grading scale.

I assign plusses and minuses as final grades, and a 94 is an A minus. So be sure to read the green sheets. Oh, and do not worry about that A minus if you are regularly an A student. If you earn them, I give bonus points for everything except Objective Exams, so if you are a really good student, you will have no problem getting the A you are used to getting.

CONTENT OF WEEKLY TABLES

INSTRUCTIONS

Always read Instruction files very, very carefully. These files tell you what you must do for each assignment.

MY NOTES

I will post lecture notes for the ethical theories and/or readings. These notes are vital. Exams will come from these notes. The notes will give you a short and sweet synopsis of the readings and as clear as I can get it understanding of the ethical theories. **Study the notes!** For the ethical theories my Notes are essential.

During midterm week I will load a file that contains a number of copy/pasted PowerPoints to study for the Midterm Exam. The PowerPoints should not be used instead of Notes when learning about the ethical theories. The PowerPoints are only to study for Midterm Exam.

DISCUSSIONS

Most of your work will be done here. This is where you go most weeks to discuss cases and topics for your Discussion Teams. Be careful not to automatically always go straight to Discussion on the toolbar or from the homepage, because you must always read announcements and instructions first.

CASE LINKS

Each time a new Case Discussion assignment begins, I link to cases in the news from which your team can choose.

READINGS

The readings for the ethical theories are there to give you some background history. There are 7 ethical theories: Rights, Utilitarianism, Justice, Virtues, Rawls, Kant, & Caring.

After these 7 theories have been introduced, we will switch to Readings that are more important, beginning with Karl Marx & Frederick Engels. But for Marx & Engels, and especially for Engels, my Notes are very important, so you should carefully study both the readings & notes for Marx/Engels.

READ AHEAD

I designate as Read Ahead, all readings that are not part of Discussion Assignments, but are content you will be expected to know for the Final Exam. These readings are **not** just background material. You must read these readings. So, after Marx/Engels, the readings become very important and my notes become much less important. Indeed, Notes after Marx and Engels are just outlines of the readings. The 2 recent readings on Software Quality must be read, there are no notes for these readings (they are very short).

SIDEBARS

Sidebar to the left includes Grades which you will need to check all semester.

FILES

All of the PDFs will be on the left hand sidebar, but I warn you, do not rely on the sidebar **Files** folder. Relying on Canvas sidebar, is not an excuse for missing a due date. You are to use the files as linked on the homepage in the table for the current week. In this course design, due dates are clear everywhere, and there is no possibility of missing a due date if you log in regularly.

PAGES

The Pages listed in the right sidebar are the weekly tables, they are available on the Homepage under current week, Future Weeks, & Past Weeks, but if you love to scroll then you can use the right hand Pages sidebar.

TECHNICAL OR CANVAS DESIGN ISSUES

SEEING WHOLE TABLES.

In an upgrade Canvas did last year, tables stopped resizing dynamically, so if you are not viewing in wide screen mode or if you have set fonts too large on your browser, the right side of the weekly table might be cut off. Adjust your browser to accommodate. **I use Firefox & Chrome as defaults, so switching to one of these browsers might help. I design exclusively in Firefox** since Chrome has weird quirks such as resizing of font aspect because I use a big attached monitor for display. Chrome is trying to be too responsive. So, if you are using Chrome or some browser besides Firefox and are having display issues, let me know and I'll try to work on it from my end.

But no guys, you can't do meaningful course work on your phone.

GO TO HOMEPAGE!

In the first year of using Canvas, I was perplexed by a recurring problem. Students were not reading INSTRUCTIONS, etc. located on the HOMEPAGE. I kept asking why they were not reading Instructions, but it sounded like criticism from me rather than a serious question I was asking. Finally, a student explained the problem:

When you log on to Canvas, you see upcoming or active assignments on the right hand Canvas sidebar. This listing of assignments is given before you enter the course shell for Phil 134. If you have more than one online course, then activated assignments for all your courses will be listed there too, because at that point you have not actually entered into one of your courses. If you click one of those assignments, for example, a discussion topic, then you are taken directly to the discussion, bypassing the homepage completely. Students just were not seeing the Weekly Work tables, and were not even sure where to click to get to the homepage to see the tables. I found a quick fix: a link to the homepage that I now add in my initial post for each discussion topic. I have considered adding the week's table too, but this will make that initial post very long, (scrolling is a pain in Canvas discussions without those added tables) and it would discourage you from reading Announcements on the homepage. **So please, if you go directly to the Discussion, click my link to Homepage.**

Update:

Canvas has changed what you see when you log on, and hopefully you will now be more likely to start from the homepage, but if you go to Discussion first, I have linked to the homepage within each topic.

DISCUSSION POSTS NOT APPEARING

Sometimes you will post and your post will not appear. In teacher mode I see number of unread posts and I'll see that one has not been read, yet it does not appear. If I then go in and post, then close and return to the topic, your post will appear. If your post is not appearing let me know & I'll post so it shows up. You will be able to see the footprints of this process when you see a post from me saying "seeking ghost post".

Spell check?

If you find your spell-checker designates a word as misspelled, this is **usually** a flaw in your spell-checker, not my mistake. I use spell-check, but most spell-check dictionaries are not intended for most esoteric graduate level vocabulary, and not intended for even elementary philosophy vocabulary. For example, *Kantian*, *Communitarianism*, and *Humean* are words but are not in most spell-check dictionaries. Most troubling is the vernacular for *unethical*. *Unethical* need not be hyphenated.

Some Dead Icons & nasty looking little preview option icons in Canvas

When I add a link to files, Canvas will create two little icons for choice of downloading or previewing. They are not pretty to look at. But they auto-load and I cannot disable or delete those little icons. Thus, I use colored background for the tables to somewhat blend in with them.

You will find on each Weekly Work table, topmost icons I have inserted that are not clickable. The un-clickable icons are indicators of the column. such as the Notes column or Instructions column. I cannot link to file folders in Canvas, so there is nothing for me to link to for that icon, and even if I could, the too primitive Canvas table editor skews my icon position formatting once links are added. Please note how much work would be involved if I had to fix this code manually. Just click around, you will find most of my icons are clickable, just not the ones in the top row of each Weekly Work table.

File formats

Prior to Canvas I just loaded all files as web pages, allowing multiple open pages. But Canvas has a very poor setup in terms of open files and web pages show poorly in this system, so I

have converted all files to PDF. Save them to your hard drive. But just in case you are without hard drive, etc., the files you need during a current week will always be loaded in the topmost table for the current week.

TOCs

You see a really long file, such as NOTES TO ALL THEORIES? Well, at the top of that pdf file I have inserted a clickable [Table of Contents](#) so you can navigate through the content. For example you can click to a specific theory and even straight to the ARGUMENT OUTLINE for that theory.

Opening Files

Some of you may find you cannot open files from the tables. This is an incompatibility problem with your browser or OS. If you cannot open the files, you can access them from the left hand Canvas frame.

Discussion Topics

I teach online classes because I do believe they are the best way to teach philosophy. Active participation in discussion is essential for learning philosophy. In live classes only a very few actively participate. Active ongoing feedback from professors is essential to learning philosophy. Such ongoing feedback is not possible in live classes: too little time, too many students. Both ongoing feedback and active discussion for everyone can be accomplished in online discussions. Everyone actively participates in each discussion, including me. This is meaningful discussion. But Canvas was not designed for meaningful discussion. Rather Canvas is a system whereby professors can set up files and video, then sit back and do nothing but grade papers. But I do. I give feedback before you get a grade, to maximize both your learning and your grades. I also grade by content, not by number of posts. I read every post at least twice, often three times. You are really graded by your own individual discussion, not just by what your team accomplishes. **For that reason, it is important that you do all correspondence with team members through the CANVAS discussion module.**

In Canvas the discussion app is actually just an almost unacceptably primitive email app. There are no subject headers, sub-headers, folders, or font formatting within discussions. Rather, there is just one post and its many replies. In more sophisticated systems, teams easily post 50 posts to one discussion but with many subheadings. But imagine here in Canvas, one post, then 50 replies, none of which have subject headers.. So, I have broken up each discussion assignment into topics, each with due dates. This is somewhat useful in keeping many students on track for doing the assignments, Pre-Canvas, I set discussions with soft due dates, allowing teams to work at their own pace. Many of the good students get worried when members post at last minute. We will work around this.

FYI: Canvas' new layout has **no "previous" button**. They've added for instructors a "Change Team" menu instead, but it is a poor substitute. I worked around by adding a self-referential link to each topic so that I can go back and forth between teams while seeing any new posts from any team.

Highlight/black out

The editor in Canvas does not have an option to cross-out text. Sometimes I will edit your text in the Contribution topic, and in order to cross out some of your text, I will use dark grey highlight which looks like I blocked out your text. That is how I indicate to delete what you had.

GENERAL INFO ABOUT THE COURSE

This course is not self-paced. Team discussions and other assignments are due at certain times. This course is progressive and democratic.

It is progressive in that you will get better at doing this course as the semester progresses. You will be given a format to follow in applying ethical theories to real cases of ethical problems. Midweek of the **second week** I will place everyone on Discussion Teams. By Thursday of the second week, click Introductions and you should see a Team, such as Discussion Team 1 or Discussion Team 2 (up to 7 teams) but you will only see one team, your team. Just go into your team and introduce yourself to team members. On Monday of the 3rd week, in the table for the 3rd week, you will see 1st Discussion, and here you will be working with your team by first choosing a case you'd like to do. You will follow the format and have ethical theories to choose from to apply to a case that your team will choose and then discuss. You will find instructions about all of this each week under Instructions (when you logon, take a look at the different weeks and their instruction files.) In Discussion topics for Theory and for Contribution, you will get feedback from me regarding theory choice and applying that theory to your case.. As the semester progresses, you will learn the format and how to apply theories to cases so that you could do this case analysis stuff in your sleep. The final paper will be so much more polished than the cases you begin with. My aim is to give you tools to help you write reports when you are a working tech genius.

This course is also democratic. This means that I am open to suggestions for changes to the course, for cases you find that we should all look at, and for working around problems with team dynamics, etc.

Team work that is successful operates democratically. Team members heed a majority voice to reach agreement, and the team reaches consensus for a final product.

You will be assigned to a team early on, and you will stick with that team throughout the semester for case discussions, reading discussions, and final team paper.

You will also notice in the Green Sheets that the final term paper is not specifically designated as a team term paper. That is because it does not have to be team work. Some of you might be forced to do an individual term paper. This is for those of you who flake on the team, you still get to submit a paper. If you flake on your team you will not get to share the work with others. You will have to do a completely different paper. The rest of you who work as a team will not actually have to write the whole 10 pages.

But although it is team work, you are graded for your individual contributions to the team.

For that reason, it is important that you do all correspondence with team members through the Canvas discussion module. (yes, I said this twice—it is really important).

You will discover very early that unlike other online courses you may have taken, I am really reading your discussions, really. I will be watching. I will be contributing. I understand that many students do not like team work, and I try to make this team dynamic as painless as possible. You do all the work? You will see very quickly that I know this and you will get credit you deserve. You think you just need to say nothing, doing no work, just saying hi guys, sorry I've been away, I do not just count up number of posts. I read your posts as I assign your grade. You might get less credit or no credit.

I am also trying to make this course as close as possible to the work you will be doing as a coder, you will be doing exactly this kind of team meshing in your careers, as you well know. Even students from other majors will find these team projects helpful later. But mostly, because the cases are interesting, it will never seem like just team busy work, which it is not.

ABOUT THE CASES

My approach to ethics for non-philosophy majors is that the only way to do this is to give you cases that interest you. What is happening today, not last year, but this week, this month. So the cases should keep you interested.

CAUTION: the links I give you are **pointers** to the cases. These are not academic article links, they are blog links. **The links I give you should not be considered the last definitive source for the case. You should always try to find more information about the case by doing a search.**

LEVEL OF WORK NEEDED

If you logon and work 4 days a week, with a weekly total of 7 hours, you should do okay. Early in the week you should read materials and prepare to approach the discussions, etc. Most of your team discussion points are divided across different topics for each case analysis: Choosing a case & Dividing roles, Choosing Theories, Contributing your part of the case analysis outline, and editing the assignment Result. These different topics have specific due dates, after which that discussion part will not be available and you lose those specific points for that specific topic. To reasonably pass you will need to do a minimum of 3 hours of discussion posts/reading posts per week. In addition, you should spend time reading Instructions, Notes, and Readings.

FEEDBACK & MY SCHEDULE

I will give feedback for Choose Theory & for Contributions topics. This feedback takes 12-14 hours of work from me for two sections of 134.. This way, you get feedback before you get graded. I do not go to special apps or outside groups or Google, because I have too many teams.

I will be online within every 24 hour period, except Saturdays, my day of rest. My hours in Canvas will vary, sometimes late night, sometimes mid morning and often wee hours of the morning when the rest of the world gets to sleep.

UPDATE:

Those 14 to 16 hour days were killing me. I have switched up some of the assignments, eliminating one of the discussion assignments and adding an Individual assignment as a case analysis, and then spread out feedback days for different sections. Feedback each feedback day should now be no longer than 8 hours.

This change, most importantly address a problem the 3rd Quiz is meant to fix, but has not: students assume the links I provide are unquestionable solid content for discussion and case analysis. Links are not cases, they are pointers. **One discussion “Understanding Links” early in the semester will be a logical critique of a link. For this discussion I will give no feedback, and that also means your team can do the work outside of Canvas, but it also means you will all get the same team score as long as you post a contribution to the analysis of the link.**

IMPORTANT: TEAM ETTIQUETTE

Because your discussion work counts for so very much of your grade in this course, problems sometimes arise between members in discussions. Here is the most important advice I have to give you:

Never call a Team Member down for being rude.

If someone is being rude, email me and let me know. I will handle it. I have been doing these online classes for a decade, and my experience has shown that the real problems arise when someone corrects someone else for being rude, etc. Do not correct the netiquette of your fellow team members. If you think someone is being nasty to you, do not reply, do not comment. Instead, email me. Often, what you think was rudeness was meant very innocently, and it is your correcting them that starts the real problem. But if there is a problem initiated by a member then I will call them on it, either in email or discussion. If necessary I will move team members to other teams, but if you follow this caution, (never correct someone for being rude to you but let me know about it instead) then everything should go just fine. Moving team members is not easy. Nobody wants to be moved once they are used to their team unless they have a problem. Moving you means leaving your team short a member and your new team with too many members.

MY OWN ETIQUETTE IN DISCUSSION.

Giving feedback takes a crazy amount of time. Usually around eight hours per class section.. If I praise everyone before offering suggestions for needed changes, then feedback would take an extra 1-2 hours. You might discover I only tell you what to fix or re-think. But that doesn't mean you will be penalized for your post. It also doesn't mean your post is not appreciated. It just means I'm trying to work to help you maximize your thinking and your work, while keeping my work down to an optimal 8 hours at the computer at a time. One way that I shave off around an hour of extra work in feedback is by using all caps for emphasis for things like ARGUMENT, RIGHTS, etc. I could use the format editor to bold or change font color instead, but I can more quickly just use my keyboard for cap shift or all caps. Sometimes I will use bold instead, but that does take extra time. So, I'm not shouting when I use all caps, I'm just trying to save time.

Information scientists should strive to deliver content most effectively. When you have a question about content or instructions, etc, I will very likely reply to your question with a question. I assume the problem is my problem, not yours, and sometimes it is just a Canvas problem. By the end of the semester, I can usually tell when the problem isn't on my end, but until then, I will always be looking for ways to better organize information. Maybe I need to clarify my language, add more links, redirect labels, etc. If someone missed some information, that's something I might be able to fix and I will be asking so I can discover what the disconnect was. You might just not have had time to find the answer in instructions or notes, and even this info is helpful, since it suggests I need a more direct and quicker path to that info. So, if you are reading instructions and notes and have a question, ask and this might help me make everything clearer for everyone.