

## **PHIL 102-06: Introduction to Moral Issues Spring 2023**

**Dr. W. Scott Clifton**

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**Office Hours: MW 3:55 PM-4:55 PM**

**Office Hours Location: LBR 1317**

**Classroom: LOW 3225 3:00-3:50 PM**

### **Introduction**

In today's world there's a lot of discussion of morality, but most of the reasoning on display is arguably confused and incomplete. It is imperative that we understand how to reason well in order to make good and sensible decisions about some of the moral problems we regularly encounter. In this course we will become acquainted with some of the most widely accepted ethical theories and try to ascertain how best to use these theories to approach some of today's most pressing moral issues. Some of the issues we will confront in this course are

- what forms of euthanasia there are and whether any of them is permissible
- what moral status abortion possesses
- what our duties are to those who are suffering
- whether capital punishment is morally permissible
- what duties we have to animals and the environment

**Note:** As you can see, the topics we discuss in this class are weighty and directly relate to many occurrences in our world – both globally and locally – on a regular basis. You should be aware that it's very possible that our coverage of these topics will intersect with significant events occurring this semester in the world, the nation, Rochester, and even on RIT's campus.

### **Assignments and Grading**

#### **1. Class Preparation**

You are responsible for demonstrating consistent preparation for class. This will require regular attendance and active discussion involvement. There will be a separate document describing the nature of this assignment in more detail. (200)

#### **2. Quizzes**

For almost every week there will be an online quiz based on that week's reading. Each quiz (10 pts. each) can be attempted multiple times. (12 X 10 = 120; one bonus quiz worth extra 10 pts.)

#### **3. Case Study Group Meetings**

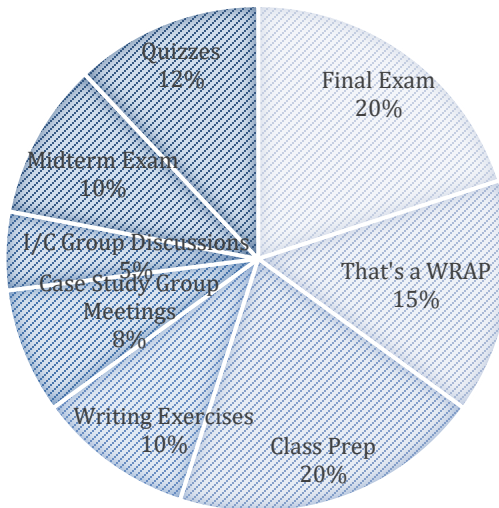
- On several weekends there will be a discussion board assignment (10 pts. each) where you will discuss a case study with members of a group you will be assigned to at the beginning of the semester. More information about this assignment category will be provided on the course website. (8 X 10 = 80)
4. Writing Exercises  
For almost every week there will be a short writing exercise (10 pts. each) due at 11:59 PM on Sunday of that week. (10 X 10 = 100)
  5. In-Class Group Discussions  
On some class days there will be an assignment occurring in the classroom in which you will meet with your small groups for a portion of the class and consider some aspect of the current week's material. You must be in the classroom on these days in order to receive credit for the assignment. (50)
  6. Midterm Exam  
There will be an online midterm exam tentatively scheduled for Week 7. (100)  
\*\*\*For those who have acquired perfect scores on their quizzes up to this point AND have completed all quizzes by their stated deadlines may opt to skip the midterm.\*\*\*
  7. Final Exam  
There will be an online final exam that will be available the entire final exam period. (200)
  8. Written Assignment (That's a WRAP)  
There will be a written assignment due at the end of the semester in which you will provide ethical counsel for a fictional company, governmental office, hospital, or school. (150)

## GRADE BREAKDOWN

Class Preparation	200
Quizzes	120
Case Study Group Meetings	80
Writing Exercises	100
In-Class Group Discussions	50
Midterm Exam	100
Written Assignment	150
Final Exam	200
Total	1000

## GRADE BREAKDOWN

- Final Exam
- That's a WRAP
- Class Prep
- Writing Exercises
- Case Study Group Meetings
- I/C Group Discussions
- Midterm Exam
- Quizzes



The grading scale is available on the website.

### Course Learning Outcomes

**(1) Written Communication:** Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. You will engage in philosophical writing, which primarily involves the statement of a thesis and the use of reasons to support that thesis.

**(2) Critical Thinking:** Thinking critically means grasping the difference between knowledge and opinion or belief and learning how to understand and make arguments and provide evidence for claims, how to interpret texts, and how to develop a conceptual analysis of an issue or set of ideas. This kind of thinking will be emphasized in both your writing and classroom discussion.

**(3) Reading:** Reading is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. This skill will be implemented in reading and writing assignments, as well as classroom discussion.

**(4) Ethical Reasoning:** Ethical reasoning is reasoning about right and wrong human conduct. It requires being able to assess one's own ethical values and the social context of problems, to recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, to

think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas, and to consider the ramifications of alternative actions. Ethical reasoning will be at the center of reading and writing assignments, and classroom discussions.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Presenting someone else's work, even unintentionally, without attribution is plagiarism, a form of cheating. Presenting *any* work (including work generated by AI machines) as your own, when it's not, is cheating. Any suspected instance of plagiarism will be reported to the appropriate university officials. If you're in doubt about what constitutes plagiarism, view the following video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pmab92ghG0M>

Students found to have plagiarized will incur a penalty, in some cases resulting in suspension from the university. All assignments submitted to the instructor, including, but not limited to, papers, exams, and discussion assignments, are governed by the university policy regarding academic dishonesty, which can be found at <https://www.rit.edu/twc/academicintegrity/>

### **Special Adjustments**

The University will make reasonable accommodations for persons with documented disabilities. Students with physical, medical, and/or psychic disabilities should apply for services at the Disability Services Office (<https://www.rit.edu/studentaffairs/disabilityservices/>)

### **Class Schedule (All readings will be electronically available on the course website)**

Note: I reserve the right to change the syllabus or the schedule for any reason. Specific dates for reading and other assignments will appear on the course website during the term.

#### **Week 1/Course Introduction**

1/17-1/22

##### **Textbook Material**

*Introduction*

#### **Week 2/Ethical Reasoning**

1/23-1/29

##### **Textbook Material**

*Chapter 1: The Basics of Ethical Reasoning*

#### **Week 3/Ethical Theories**

1/30-2/5

**Textbook Material**

*Chapter 2: What are Ethical Theories?*

**Week 4/Consequentialism**

2/6-2/12

**Textbook Material**

*Chapter 3: It's All About the Consequences, Stupid: Consequentialist Ethical Theories*

**Week 5/Obligations to Other Persons**

2/13-2-19

**Textbook Material**

*Chapter 4: Just How Demanding Is Morality, Anyway?*

**Week 6/Obligations to Animals**

2/20-2/26

**Textbook Material**

*Chapter 5: Should Non-Human Animals Have a Place at the (Discussion) Table?*

**Week 7/Non-Consequentialism**

2/27-3/5

**Textbook Material**

*Chapter 6: The Consequences Don't Matter, Dummy: Non-Consequentialist Ethical Theories*

**Week 8/Gun Control**

3/6-3/12

**Textbook Material**

*Chapter 7: Hold Your Fire? The Ethics of Gun Regulation*

**Week 9/Virtue Ethics**

3/20-3/26

**Textbook Material**

*Chapter 8: Just Try to Be a Good Person, Moron: Virtue Ethics*

**Week 10/Euthanasia**

3/27-4/2

**Textbook Material**

*Chapter 9: On the Right to Determine One's Own Death: The Morality of Euthanasia*

**Week 11/Abortion**

4/3-4/9

**Textbook Material**

*Chapter 10: Making Sense of the Moral Issue of Abortion*

**Week 12/ Capital Punishment**

4/10-4/16

**Textbook Material**

*Chapter 11: The State's Right to Kill Its Own Citizens and the Purpose of Criminal Law*

**Week 13/Ethics and Race**

4/17-4/23

**Textbook Material**

*Chapter 12: Justice, Ethics, and Race*

**Week 14/Catch-Up**