

Philosophy 4: Introduction to Ethics

Summer 2015

Instructor

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Course Description

This course will serve as an introduction to ethical theory. We will discuss three meta-ethical views: cultural relativism, divine command theory, and hedonism. We will discuss two normative ethical theories, including utilitarianism and Kantianism, with an emphasis on Kant's ethics of autonomy. Finally, we will look at some contemporary problems of applied ethics, including some of the following: famine relief, abortion, affirmative action, and civil disobedience.

Course Requirements

You will be required to complete an in-class midterm, a take-home midterm, and a take-home final. In addition, you are required to attend and participate in all of your sections. Some opportunities for (light) extra credit will be announced in class as they arise.

Your final grade in the course will be determined by completion of these assignments as follows:

- In-class midterm (August 25): 20%
- Take-home midterm (Due September 8): 30%
- Take-home final exam (Due September 14): 35%
- Section participation: 15%

Readings

Readings can either be found in the reader or on the course website. They will be assigned in class as we progress through the material. It is imperative that you complete readings as they are assigned. We will most likely not cover all of the assigned readings in six weeks, so you will need to attend lecture and pay attention in order to know what you should be reading next.

Learning Resources

There is a website for this course, which can be found at <http://coreymcgrath.me/phil4/>. This site contains links to useful material online for learning more about ethics, as well as links those readings not included in the course reader. The course website is also where you can find your reading quizzes.

In addition, there is a course chat room where you will be able to contact me and your TAs for discussion outside of the classroom. You can find this at <http://phil4m15.slack.com>. Since there are 100 students, the chat room is divided into 4 'channels': one for each section. You are also free to make your own channels for discussion among smaller groups.

Plagiarism

You are responsible for knowing the university policy on academic dishonesty (available online at: <http://judicialaffairs.sa.ucsb.edu/AcademicIntegrity.aspx>). If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism, please ask me or your TA for clarification.

Plagiarism often happens when students feel there is no other option should they want to pass the course. If you are having difficulty with the course, you should notify me and your TA as soon as possible so that we can help you.

Please note that the consequences for academic dishonesty are severe, and may result in failure of the course, suspension from the university, and even expulsion.

Late Assignment Policy

In the absence of an excuse, late *take-home* assignments will be penalized by 1/3 letter grade per day, while the *in-class* midterm may be rescheduled with a 1/3 letter grade penalty, but must be completed *by the end of the final week of August*.

In the case of genuine emergency, assignments may be completed late without penalty. In such cases, you must present a letter from a doctor, mental health professional, or family member.

Reading List

Readings marked with asterisks are optional, but recommended

Unit 0: Introduction

- Plato, excerpt from Euthyphro*
- Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”*

Unit 1: Normative Ethics

- Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 1, 2, 4
- Nozick, “The Experience Machine”
- Korsgaard, “Two Arguments Against Lying”

Unit 2: World Hunger

- Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”
- O’Neill, “Kantian approaches to some famine problems”

Unit 3: Abortion

- Gordon, “Abortion”, sections 1 and 2, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
- Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”
- Singer, “Taking Life: The Embryo and the Fetus”, *Practical Ethics*

Unit 4: Racism and Sexism

- Frye, “Oppression”
- Frye, “Sexism”
- Appiah, “Racisms”
- Elkholy, “Feminism and Race in the United States”, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy**

Unit 5: Affirmative Action

- Pojman, “The Case Against Affirmative Action”
- Rachels, “In Defense of Quotas”
- Gheaus, “Three Cheers for the Token Woman!”

Unit 6: Civil Disobedience

- King, “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
- Brownlee, “Civil Disobedience”, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*