

PHIL 115
TTH 11:50-1:30PM (11J)
Library 201

Professor Jessica Wahman
jessica.tabor.wahman@emory.edu
Office Hours: TTH 2-3:15
(other times by appointment)

Introduction to Ethics

Philosophical approaches to ethics and morality involve longstanding questions of value. What is good, what is right, and how can we determine these goods or right actions? Does ethics involve doing the right thing, having the right intent, or being the right sort of person? In each of these cases, how do we determine what exactly *is* the right action, state of mind, or the best way of life? Do we use reason or emotions or a combination of the two? Can we make these determinations in general, or are such decisions relative to the individual? And finally, how do ethical concerns bear on our relationships with our selves, other individuals, and members of a larger society?

This course approaches these questions by examining the writings of several key thinkers in the history of philosophy. Among the questions listed above, two we will focus especially closely on are: 1) the relationship between psychology (including brain biology) and ethics; and 2) the relationship between the individual and her or his broader social nexus. The final segment of the course will combine these areas of concentration to examine ethical issues that are emerging in the face of scientific and technological breakthroughs in neuroscience.

Required Texts (in the order in which we will read them)

Plato, *The Trial and Death of Socrates*—Hackett Publishing
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*—Hackett
David Hume, *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*—Hackett
Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*—Hackett
John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*—Hackett
Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*—Vintage Books
Martha J. Farah, *Neuroethics: An Introduction with Readings*—MIT Press

All the texts are available in the bookstore.

Written Assignments

This course is designated a Performance with Writing course, which means there will be a great deal of practice in the written expression of ideas as well as opportunities and expectations for revision of written work.

I. Analytical Papers: Every class meeting a one-page paper is due on the assigned reading for that day. I will provide a handout explaining the assignment, my expectations for its completion, and the grading policy and practice. **All graded analytical papers must be completed and submitted on time in order to pass the course.**

II. Midterm and Final: The midterm and final exams will be broken down into an **in-class short answer** portion and a **take-home essay** portion. The **midterm** essay portion must be turned in electronically as a .doc or .docx file in an email attachment on the day assigned by the end of our class period on that day (see reading/assignment schedule). The **final** essay portion may be turned in either electronically or as a printed document before the in-class portion of the exam during finals week (see schedule). In **both** cases, the short answer segment will be closed-book. For the essay portions you will be able to use your books, notes, and analytical papers. **The midterm and final exams must be completed in order to pass this course.**

Classroom Policies

Attendance: Your attendance is required at all class meetings. Any unexcused absences will result in a “0” grade on **overall** class participation, even if you were active in discussion on the days you were present. Philosophical inquiry is a communal enterprise; the purpose of this policy is to ensure the continuity of our community. Absences will be excused only in the case of a serious illness, dire emergency, or observation of a recognized religious holiday (please notify me *in advance* of this required absence). Examples of events that do NOT constitute serious illnesses or dire emergencies are: fatigue, head colds, hay fever or other non life-threatening allergies, oversleeping/alarm clock failure, travel plans for early holiday getaway, studying for tests/catching up on work for other courses, or leveling up on World of Warcraft.

Lateness policy: You are expected to come to class on time, as am I. I will hand around a sign-in sheet at the beginning of class, and if you are not present at that time, you will be considered “late” for that class. No more than two latenesses are permitted. After two “late” marks, if you are late to class, you will be marked as “absent” from that class (see attendance policy above).

Class Participation: Discussion of philosophical material is an expectation of all of us as part of a community of learners. There are two ways in which you will be expected to participate throughout the semester: 1) in class through question-and-answer and more open-ended inquiry regarding the significance of the textual material, and 2) as a peer-reviewer of another student’s work (see handout). I realize that some of you are more comfortable talking in class than are others, and so a diligent student who gives substantive, constructive, and regular written feedback on papers but is otherwise quiet in class will earn a “B” in class participation. However, part of doing philosophy is discussing and examining ideas together so that we may (kindly and respectfully!) divulge any weaknesses and (thoughtfully and articulately!) develop shared meanings. Therefore, excellent participation requires classroom interaction with both me and your peers. In addition, as critique and shared understanding are the goals of class discussion, excellence in participation is not reflected by the **quantity** of one’s contributions but by their **quality**. Attentive listening with occasional well thought-out comments is

preferable to frequent but off-the-cuff reactions.

Cell phones and personal computers. The use of cell phones is prohibited in class. If you want to take notes on a laptop or tablet, that is fine, but you will be expected to disconnect your wi-fi connection during class time, as personal web surfing, emailing, tweeting, Facebook posting, etc., is both academically and socially unacceptable in a learning community.

Grading Policy

Honor Code: All work in this course comes under the regulations of Oxford College's Honor Code. Your signature on your work attests to your upholding of the Honor Code. Please read the information on plagiarism on the Library web page and always ask me if you have any questions about assignments. Please also note that none of your writing assignments are intended to be research projects, so there should be no need for you to quote outside sources in any of your work. Of course, if you find it absolutely necessary to do so, you *must* cite your work or be in violation of the Honor Code.

The general percentages that I will consider when determining your grade are as follows:

Class participation:	20%
Analytical Papers:	40%
Midterm (in-class/take-home combined):	20%
Final Exam:	20%

Please note that these percentages should be considered a guideline for understanding the relative weight of each area of your involvement. When assigning grades I will take into consideration—in addition to these quantitative percentages—such qualitative factors as disintegration of effort or noted improvement.

Welcome! I look forward to working with you and to our collective engagement with these provocative ideas.

READING/ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE¹
(Roman numerals next to date refer to graded paper section)

1/14	Introduction to the course
1/16 (All) ²	Plato, <i>Apology</i> (full period) ³
1/21 (I)	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> (all)
1/23 (II)	<i>Euthyphro</i> , cont. (re-read dialogue)
1/28 (I)	Plato, <i>Crito</i>
1/30 (II)	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (N.E.), Book I (full period)
2/04 (I)	N.E., Book II
2/06 (II)	N.E., Book VIII
2/11 (I)	N.E., Book X
2/13 (II)	Hume, <i>Enquiry</i> , Sections I & II, Appendices I & II
2/18 (I)	<i>Enquiry</i> , Section III, Appendix III
2/20 (II)	<i>Enquiry</i> , Section V, part I, Section IX (take-home handed out)
2/25	Midterm in-class portion
2/27	Midterm take-home portion due (class will not meet)
3/04 (I)	Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Preface & First Section
3/06 (II)	<i>Grounding</i> , Second Section (pp. 19-32, marginal #423)
3/11	Spring Break
3/13	Spring Break
3/18 (II)	<i>Grounding</i> , Second Section (pp. 32-48)
3/20 (I)	<i>Grounding</i> , Third Section
3/25 (II)	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapters I-III
3/27 (I)	<i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapters IV & V
4/01(All) ²	Nietzsche, <i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , Preface and Part I, Sections 1-14
4/03	Class will not meet
4/08 (II)	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , Part V (all); Part VII, Sects. 214-229 (full period)

¹ Readings and assignments are subject to revision as needed. You will be notified in class in advance of any changes.

² Peer feedback only

³ Refers to days when we will use the full hour and 40 minute period

4/10 (I) *Beyond Good and Evil* Part IX, Sects. 257-265; 277-296

READING/ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE (cont.)

4/15 (II) Farah, *Neuroethics*, Chapters 1, 2 and 2.1 (1-29) (**full period**)
4/17(I) *Neuroethics*, Chapter 4: intro, 4.4, and 4.5 (pp. 137-146; 185-200)

4/22 (II) *Neuroethics*, Chapter 5: intro and 5.1 (pp. 211-231)
4/24 (I) *Neuroethics*, 5.2 (pp. 232-257) (**take-home handed out**)

Our final exam is Thursday, May 1, 2- 3:30 PM. (Note that the exam will not take up the full three hour period allotted by the registrar)