

## Ethics (PHIL 115)

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*Oxford College of Emory University, Fall 2015*

### Course Description

What is happiness? Is murder ever the right thing to do? What does it mean to respect another person, an animal, or the environment? Why should wealthy North Americans help people living in poverty around the world? These are some of the questions that a philosophical investigation of ethics may raise.

In this course we will: explore different theoretical approaches to these and other questions, think about and discuss contemporary issues and case studies, and gain insight into these issues and cases as well as our own values and beliefs.

### Learning Objectives

Through participating in this course students will:

- Comprehend the central concepts, theories, and arguments of major ethical theories;
- Develop the creative and critical thinking necessary for reading and discussing philosophical texts, including:
  - Identifying key concepts and arguments in philosophical texts,
  - Assessing arguments (i.e. judge the strength of arguments, identify weaknesses, and evaluate the importance of weaknesses), and
  - Developing objections to arguments;
- Apply ethical theories to analyze and think creatively about case studies and contemporary issues in writing, including:
  - Identifying ethical features of cases,
  - Describing the significance of these features from the perspective of specific ethical theories, and
  - Develop creative objections in response to these analyses; as well as
- Gain an appreciation for the importance of taking a philosophical approach to ethics:
  - Taking a critical attitude towards their own beliefs and values, as well as those of others, and
  - Defending their attitudes and judgments through reasoned argumentation.

11J: T & Th 11:50 am - 1:30 pm

03J: T & Th 3:30 pm - 5:10 pm

Location: Language Hall 101

Instructor: Dr. Andrew A. Robinson

Email: [andrew.a.robinson@emory.edu](mailto:andrew.a.robinson@emory.edu)

Office: 807 Whatcoat St.

Office Hours:

Mon. & Wed. 4:30 - 5:30,

Tues. & Thurs. 2:00 - 3:00, and

By appointment.

### Required Texts

Marino, G., ed. 2010. *Ethics: the essential writings*. New York: Modern Classics Library.

Edmonds, D. 2014. *Would you kill the fat man? The trolley problem and what your answer tells us about right and wrong*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

## Assessments

### Applied Ethics Case Treatments (4 X 10 = 40%)

These writing assignments will ask you to analyze a given case that we will have previously discussed in class. Each of these assignments will be between 900-1000 words and consist of four sections:

1. An introductory paragraph stating your thesis,
2. A brief description the case,
3. A description of relevant features of the case with an explanation of their importance (from the perspective of a specific ethical theory), and
4. A description of a shortcoming or problem with this approach.

The instructor will provide detailed instructions and a rubric for assessment early in the semester.

### Exams (45%)

- Mid-Term #1 (10)
- Mid-Term #2 (15)
- Final Exam (20)

The instructor will provide further details regarding the format of the exams as the semester progresses.

### Participation (15%)

- Readiness Assessments (5)
- Workshop and Peer-Evaluation Participation (5)
- Evaluation of Participation (5)

Philosophy is fundamentally conversational. Thus, regular, engaged participation in our ongoing conversation is a required element of this class. Participation in this class requires, minimally, that you do the following:

- Come to class regularly and on time;
- Pay attention (cell phones, tablets, and laptops are prohibited);\*
- Regularly contribute to the conversation by:
  - Asking questions,
  - Making comments informed by the text (and citing it when you can),
  - Listening to your classmates and responding to them respectfully, and
  - Taking care not to dominate the conversation;
- Actively participate in small group discussions and workshops; and
- Bring your book and a pen to class every time.

### Due Dates and Exams

09/17 Case Treatment #1

**10/01 Mid-Term #1**

10/08 Case Treatment #2

10/29 Case Treatment #3

**11/12 Mid-Term #2**

12/03 Case Treatment #4

**12/11 Final Exam (03J)**

**12/15 Final Exam (11J)**

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\* Exceptions will be made for differently-abled students.

## Schedule of Readings, Activities, and Due Dates

<i>Date</i>	<i>Preparation</i>	<i>Activities</i>	<i>Due Dates</i>
08/25	No class	No class	No class
08/27		Introduction to Ethics Discussion: Friendship	
09/01	Benedict, "Anthropology and the Abnormal," Marino, pp. 309-322	Workshop #1: Identifying arguments and objections Discussion: For Ethical Relativism	
09/03	Midgley, "Trying Out One's New Sword," Marino, pp. 322-327	Workshop #1: Identifying arguments and objections Discussion: Against Ethical Relativism Workshop #3: Writing a Case Treatment Discussion: Case #1	
09/08	Edmonds, Prologue, Ch. 1 and 2, pp. xiii-xiv, 3-12	Discussion: Ethical Dilemmas and Thought Experiments Workshop #4: Philosophical discussion	
09/10	Edmonds, Ch. 4 and 5, pp. 27-43	Discussion: DDE and the Trolley Problem	
09/15	Edmonds Ch. 6, pp. 44-56 Kant, <i>Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Marino (excerpts TBA)	Workshop #5: Peer Review of Writing Discussion: Intention	
09/17	Edmonds Ch. 7, pp. 57-68	Discussion: Problems with Intention	<b>Case #1 due</b>
09/22	Kant, <i>Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Marino (excerpts TBA)	Workshop #6: Writing exam questions Discussion: Personhood	
09/24	Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights," Marino, pp. 530-544	Discussion: Animals and the Moral Community	
09/29		Discussion: Case #2	
10/01	<b>Mid-term #1</b>	<b>Mid-term #1</b>	<b>Mid-term #1</b>
10/06	Edmonds, Ch. 8, pp. 69-83 Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Marino pp. 225-238	Discussion: Utilitarianism	

10/08	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Marino pp. 238-248	Discussion: Utilitarianism	<b>Case #2 due</b>
10/13	No class	No class	No class
10/15	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Marino pp. 248-255	Discussion: Utilitarianism	
10/20	Singer, "Rich and Poor," Marino, pp. 506-529	Discussion: Distant Others	
10/22	Edmonds, Ch. 15, pp. 169-174	Discussion: Case #3	
10/27	MacIntyre, <i>After Virtue</i> , Marino, pp. 396-423	Discussion: Virtue Ethics	
10/29	Coles, "The Disparity Between Intellect and Character," Marino, pp. 351-355	Discussion: Intellect and Character	<b>Case #3 due</b>
11/03	King, "Letter from the Birmingham Jail," Marino, pp. 356-377	Discussion: Natural Law and Social Justice	
11/05	Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> , Marino, pp. 380-386	Discussion: Justice and the Social Contract	
11/10	Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> , Marino, pp. 386-395	Discussion: The Original Position and Two Principles of Justice	
11/12	<b>Mid-Term #2</b>	<b>Mid-Term #2</b>	<b>Mid-Term #2</b>
11/17	Noddings, <i>Caring</i> , Marino, pp. 424-444	Discussion: Care Ethics	
11/19	Noddings cont'd	Discussion: Care Ethics	
11/24	Held, "Can the ethics of care handle violence?" (Course reserve)	Discussion: Terrorism and Intimate Partner Abuse Discussion: Case #4	
11/26	No class	No class	No class
12/01	Nietzsche, "On the Genealogy of Morality," Marino, pp. 277-298	Discussion: the Limits of Morality	
12/03	Sartre, "Existentialism and Human Emotion," Marino, pp. 329-332  Hallie, "From Cruelty to Goodness," Marino, pp. 334-349	Discussion: Hospitality  Discussion: Existential Freedom and Individual Responsibility	<b>Case #4 due</b>
12/08	Walker, "Moral Luck and the Virtues of Impure Agency," (Course reserve)	Discussion: Moral Luck	

## Policies

### Attendance

The instructor will take attendance at the beginning of each class meeting. Students are expected to attend all classes. The instructor recognizes that illnesses or emergencies may lead to absences. For this reason no student will be penalized for her or his first two (2) absences in the semester. If possible, please notify me via email if you are going to miss a class. If any student misses a class in addition to the initial two absences, the instructor will deduct 1% from the student's final grade for each meeting she or he misses. The instructor will not penalize students for absences due to the observance of religious holidays, if and only if the student advises him of their plans by 5 pm on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.

### Blackboard

Blackboard should be your first point of contact for this course. You can find a copy of this syllabus as well as any specific information about assignments and deadlines. You will also find any special announcements pertinent to the course. **All assignments will be submitted electronically through the Blackboard site, unless otherwise specified.** You can also use the chat and discussion functions to communicate with other students in the course.

### Email Policy

I strive to stay in touch with you outside of class hours, and will generally attempt to answer messages within 24 hours. Please note, however, that I will not answer messages received after 6 PM until the following day. Additionally, I will not respond to questions sent after 6 PM the evening before a scheduled test or exam. I also reserve the right to not respond to questions that can be easily answered by reading the syllabus or visiting the Blackboard site for the course. Finally, I do NOT discuss grades via email. Please make an appointment to see me if you would like to discuss any course grades.

### Office Hours

I have four hours reserved every week for meeting with students: Mondays and Wednesday from 4:30 to 5:30 pm and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 2:00 to 3:00 pm. Please make use of these hours! If you have questions about course content or assignments, it is much easier for me to address them in person rather than by email. If possible, please send me an email to let me know that you are coming and when I can expect you. If you cannot make the scheduled hours, please contact me via email to arrange an alternative meeting time. My office is located at 804 Whatcoat St. in the little yellow house between the Oxford Mail Center and the USPS office.

### Academic Integrity

Academic honesty is extremely important, and so violations of the Oxford College Honor Code will not be tolerated. I will not hesitate to report any such violations to the Honor Council. Infractions of the Honor Code include plagiarism, cheating, seeking or giving unauthorized assistance, and lying related to academic matters. Further information on Honor Code infractions and procedures are available in the Oxford College Student Handbook, and online:

[http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current\\_students/Academic/academic-success/studenthonor-code/index.dot](http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current_students/Academic/academic-success/studenthonor-code/index.dot)

### Disability Access

I encourage any students with abilities that may impact their access to or performance in any component of this course to register with Oxford College's Office of Disability Services, and to let me know about necessary accommodations as soon as possible. The ODS is located in the Student Health/Counseling Center in Beta Hall of the East Village residence.