

Introduction to Ethics
PHIL_OX 115-02A1
Fall 2017
MW 2:30-4:10
Language Hall 101

Instructor Rebekah Spera

E-Mail: rspera@emory.edu

Office: Emory 602

Note: Emory 602 is the
unmarked gray house
across the street from
Human Resources.

Office Hours:

MW 4:10-5:10

Or by appointment

Required Texts:

Gordon Marino. *Ethics: The Essential Writings*. (ISBN: 9780812977783)

Course Description:

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that addresses the practical dimensions of human life, both personal and social. What does it mean to live the good life? Is the question “what is the good” meaningful? Do we have obligations to our fellow human beings? To animals? To the environment? To ourselves? If we do, what is the source and nature of these obligations? How do we know what is right and wrong, good and bad, virtuous and vicious? This course will introduce the student to the way in which various philosophers in the Western tradition have attempted to answer, or even dismiss, these questions.

The texts will be presented in chronological order to give the student an historical understanding of the way in which the ethical tradition has evolved in Western philosophy, beginning with Plato and continuing through philosophers writing in the last century. The student will be introduced to a variety of approaches, including but not limited to virtue ethics, deontological ethics, utilitarian ethics and existentialist ethics. By the end of the class, the student will have a sound general knowledge of the various ethical traditions in the western philosophy as well as the ability to identify, articulate and interrogate their own views on this cluster of vitally important questions.

Catalog Description: Introductory examination of fundamental moral questions, such as the best way of life for a human being, the relationship between happiness and moral excellence, and the nature of ethical reasoning, as treated by major philosophers in the history of western philosophy.

Course Outcomes:

By the end of the course, the student will have learned to:

- Understand and articulate the differences between major schools of ethical thought
- Know the historical development of ethical and moral thinking in the West from ancient Greece to the present
- Parse and evaluate arguments, both their own and those of others
- Reflect on their own philosophical presuppositions and viewpoints critically
- Articulate their own philosophical positions rigorously and respectfully
- Write clearly and effectively about ethical issues

Grade Distribution:**Papers:**

Short Papers 1, 2 & 3:	30% (10% each)
Final Paper:	20%

Exams:

Midterm Exam:	15%
Final Exam:	15%

Participation:	20%
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Course Policy

Participation & Classroom Etiquette:

Philosophical inquiry requires both that the student spend time alone reading, writing and thinking and that they engage in conversation with others. This class will require not only that the student read carefully and write thoughtfully, but also that they be both physically and mentally present for every class. The class will be partially conducted as a lecture and partially as a conversation, and every student will be expected to contribute cogently and respectfully to class discussion. While active participation comes more naturally to some individuals than others, one of the skills the student will cultivate throughout the semester is the ability to express their own thoughts verbally and to listen to and engage with other students thoughtfully and respectfully. This is a skill that will be helpful both in and out of the classroom.

Tardiness is disrespectful both to me and other students, and if a student is consistently late it will affect their grade. The student should come to every class prepared with a notebook and the required text(s).

The use of electronic devices is not permitted in the classroom, and this includes using electronic devices for notetaking. The reason for this is that regardless of good intentions, the ever-present temptation to check social media or surf the web during class can overcome even the most virtuous among us. Additionally, studies have shown that students retain more in classes when they take notes by hand. I may, however, grant exceptions on an individual basis if a student arranges to meet with me to discuss why they need to use their laptop/tablet in class to succeed in the course. Cell phones must be turned off in class and stowed out of sight.

Failure to comply with these policies will affect a student's attendance grade.

Attendance:

For the reasons sated above, attendance is required.

That being said, life can be unpredictable and things happen. Because of this the student is allowed a maximum of two absences for any reason with no questions asked. Once this maximum has been reached, additional absences will detract from the student's grade on the following scale (note: the numbers listed here are absences beyond the two allowed absences, so two absences below means four total absences - two freebies and two additional absences):

- 2-4 absences: -1.5% from the final grade for each absence
- 5-6 absences: 3.0% from the final grade for each absence
- 7-8 absences: 4.5% from the final grade for each absence
- 9+ absences: a final grade of F for the course

Absences will only be excused in cases of religious holidays and university-sanctioned activities (e.g., out-of-town debate club tournaments, presentations at academic conferences, &c. warrant excused absences; leaving town early to get an extra few days during fall break or scheduling time to do work for other classes do **not** warrant excused absences). However, **the student must notify me of the dates they will be absent for these reasons *in advance***. If the student fails to notify me in advance, the absences will not be excused.

Note: disability-related attendance accommodations can only be provided with documentation from the Office of Accessibility Services. See “Disability and Access” for more details about how to get accommodations.

Papers:

Papers are to be submitted printed out and stapled, with the student's name on every page and a word count on the last page. All sources must be properly cited – if there are questions or concerns about how to cite texts, the student should feel free to ask me or contact the Writing Center. Requests for extensions must be submitted least a week prior to the due date of the paper, and will be given at my discretion. No extensions will be granted for short papers.

Students are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the resources available at the Writing Center (EWC). They may visit the WC at any stage during the paper-writing process for help with everything from brainstorming to paper revisions. They may find more information on WC policies and how to book appointments here: <https://inside.oxford.emory.edu/academics/centers-institutes-programs/writing-center>

Readings:

The student must have completed the reading for every class. The ability to read philosophical texts is a skill that must be carefully developed, and the texts ought to be read slowly and carefully. Part of being adequately prepared for class entails having spent time and care to digest the readings.

E-mail Policy:

Feel free to contact me via e-mail with questions you have about the course material, and I will respond within a 48-hour period. Use the e-mail provided on the syllabus.

Questions about papers (whether asked by e-mail or in person during office hours) must be submitted at least two days in advance of the due date. Questions about exams may not be sent the day before the exam. Additionally, if the student has missed classes, it is not appropriate to ask the instructor about the material covered during their absence. Instead, they should contact a fellow student and request copies of their notes.

Academic Misconduct:

Academic misconduct will not be tolerated; students must adhere to the Honor Code of Oxford College. All violations will be reported to the Honor Council, in accordance with the Code. 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-student-honor-code/index.dot Should a student have a question about permissible behavior or academic integrity, they may contact me.

Disability and Access:

The Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) works with students who have disabilities to provide reasonable accommodations. **In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, students must contact OAS and complete the registration process.** Faculty may not provide disability accommodations until an accommodation letter has been processed; accommodations are not retroactive. Students registered with OAS who receive a letter outlining specific academic accommodations are strongly encouraged to coordinate a meeting time with their professor to discuss a protocol to implement the accommodations as needed throughout the semester. This meeting should occur as early in the semester as possible. Contact OAS for more information at (770) 784-4690 or oas_oxford@emory.edu. Additional information is available at the OAS website at <http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/students/index.html>.

Religious Holidays:

I am happy to accommodate students' academic needs related to religious holidays. However, please make every effort to notify me about your religious holiday needs within the first two weeks of the semester. [If you need guidance negotiating your needs related to a religious holiday, the College Chaplain, Rev. Lyn Pace, \[ppace@emory.edu\]\(mailto:ppace@emory.edu\), Candler Hall 202, is willing and available to help. ****Please be aware that Rev. Pace is not tasked with excusing students from classes or writing excuses for students to take to their professors.**](#)

Class Schedule:

*Note: Schedule is subject to change at the instructor's discretion.
The student will be notified of any alterations in advance.*

W 8/23	Introduction: What is ethics?
M 8/28	Plato
	Readings: <i>Republic</i> Book II (38-42) <i>Euthyphro</i> (6-23)
W 8/30	Plato
	Readings: <i>Euthyphro</i>
Note: End of Add/Drop Period	
M 9/4	NO CLASS – LABOR DAY
W 9/6	Aristotle
	Readings: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (46-65)
M 9/11	Aristotle
	Readings: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (66-80) Assignment Due: Summary Paper
W 9/13	Aristotle
	Readings: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (80-84)
M 9/18	NO CLASS – INSTRUCTOR OUT OF TOWN
W 9/20	Hume (153-170)
M 9/25	Hume (170-187)
W 9/27	Kant (191-203)
M 10/2	Kant (203-224)
W 10/4	TBA
M 10/9	NO CLASS – FALL BREAK
W 10/11	Mill (228-248)
M 10/16	Mill (249-255)
W 10/18	MIDTERM EXAM
M 10/23	Nietzsche (277-298)
	Assignment Due: Comparison Paper
W 10/25	Nietzsche

M 10/30	Nietzsche	<i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i>
W 11/1	Nietzsche	<i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i>
M 11/6	Ruth Benedict	Readings: "Anthropology & the Abnormal"
W 11/8	Mary Midgley	Readings: "Trying out one's new sword"
M 11/13	Martin Luther King	Readings: <i>Letter from a Birmingham Jail</i>
W 11/15	Malcolm X	Readings: TBD
M 11/20	Noel Noddings	Readings: <i>An Ethic of Care</i> Assignment Due: Critical Paper
W 11/22	NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK	
M 11/27	Tom Regan	Readings: "The Case for Animal Rights"
W 11/29	Aldo Leopold	Readings: "The Land Ethic"
M 12/4	Conclusion/Discussion Final Paper: Due date TBA Final Exam: Date/Time TBA	