

PHIL 4

Introduction to Ethics

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Semester Year. Classroom.

Meeting Times.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

This course is a beginner's level exploration of ethical thinking and applications to real issues in the world. We will cover some theoretical matters about ethics: Are moral judgments true or false? Are moral rules relative to culture or people? What makes an action right or wrong? What makes a society just? Does morality depend on religion? We will also cover some applied issues in ethics: Is it wrong to kill animals? Is abortion wrong? Should recreational drugs be legalized?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students who successfully complete the course will...

1. Be able to understand, explain and discuss critically different ethical theories, meta-ethical problems and ethical and social issues;
2. Come to appreciate the complexity of the moral decisions they make every day and the moral issues that affect their lives;
3. Improve their writing ability by working on argument analysis and critique.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- 20% Reading Quizzes
- 25% Paper (or Take Home Exam) - Meta-Ethics & Normative Ethics
- 20% Research Project - Applied Ethics
- 25% Final (cumulative)
- 10% Participation

Reading Quizzes

Reading quizzes will take the form of short questions to test students understanding of the readings. They will be posted online and will be due *before* the first lecture the reading will be discussed. There will be no more than one quiz per week.

Paper (or Take Home Exam)

This assignment will be due on week 7. Paper prompts will be assigned two weeks before the paper is due. Take Home Exams will be posted at the end of week 6.

Research Project

Students will be divided in groups. Each group will be assigned a case of the Applied Ethics section. For each the cases to be discussed, we will begin with an informal in class discussion to gather our intuitions and raise questions. Students assigned to the case will be in charge of keeping a record of the questions. I will then meet with each group to discuss possible answers to the questions. The group will write a short report of the meeting to be presented in class. Each student will be assigned only one case. I will demonstrate how to do the assignment for the first case.

Final

The final exam will be cumulative and in short essay format.

Participation

Participation will count towards student's final grade at the instructor's discretion. Attendance will be taken but do not expect a perfect grade merely for being an organic body.

NOTE: Things change – the Fates are fickle. Consequently, information found on this syllabus is subject to revision as we progress through the quarter: Readings and content may be added (or cut) depending on our rate of progress, and it may be

necessary to amend the due date of the assignments. Revisions will be announced in lecture and posted online. It is each student's responsibility to keep informed of any changes.

MATERIALS

- Blackburn, Simon. *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics*. 2nd edition, Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Additional readings to be posted on my personal website

Students are expected to have done the readings and answered the quiz *before* lecture.

COURSE SCHEDULE & READINGS

WEEK 1: *The Basics of Moral Arguments*

- What is argument?
- Argument vs. Explanation.
- Deductive vs. Inductive.
- Objecting to Arguments.
- Thought Experiments, "AITA, that if Jurassic Park were real, I would tell my husband that he cannot go." https://www.reddit.com/r/AmItheAsshole/comments/chzjl5/aita_that_if_jurassic_park_were_real_i_would_tell/.

WEEK 2 & 3: *Meta-Ethics*

- Cognitivism vs. Non-Cognitivism
 - Rachels *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, Chap 3.
- Objective vs. Subjective
 - Rachels *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, Chap 3.
- Relativism
 - Blackburn, *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics*, Chap 2.

WEEK 3 - 6: *Normative Ethics*

- Divine Command Theory
 - Blackburn, *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics* "The Death of God" pp. 10-9.
 - Dalai Lama *Ethics for the New Millennium*, chapter 15 "The Role of Religion in Modern Society" (online).

- Consequentialism: Egoism, Utilitarianism
 - Blackburn, *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics*, Chap 12.
- Deontology
 - Blackburn, *Being Good: A Short Introduction to Ethics*, Chap 18.
- Virtue Ethics
 - Rosalind Hursthouse *On Virtue Ethics*, chapter 1, 2 & 8 (online).

WEEK 7 - 11: Applied Ethics

4-5 topics to be chosen on the first week of classes. Here is a list of possible topics and respective readings:

- Euthanasia
 - Helga Kuhse "The Case for Active Voluntary Euthanasia".
 - Fr. Robert Barry "The Case against Active Voluntary Euthanasia".
- Abortion
 - Judith Jarvis Thomson "A Defense of Abortion".
 - Don Marquis "Why Abortion is Immoral".
 - Michael Tooley "Abortion and Infanticide".
- Drugs
 - Michael Huemer "America's Unjust Drug War".
 - Peter De Marneffe "Do We Have a Right to Use Drugs?".
 - James Q. Wilson "Against the Legalization of Drugs".
- Gun Control
 - Michael Huemer "Is there a right to own a gun?".
 - Nicholas Dixon "Handguns, Violent Crime, and Self-Defense".
- Animal Rights
 - Tom Regan "The Case for Animal Rights".
 - Peter Singer "All Animals Are Equal".
 - Tibor R. Machan "Do Animals Have Rights?".
 - Nathanael Johnson "Is there a moral case for eating meat?".
- Immigration
 - Michael Huemer "Is There a Right to Immigrate?".
 - Stephen Macedo "The Moral Dilemma of U.S. Immigration Policy: Open Borders versus Social Justice?".
- Monogamy
 - John McMurtry "Monogamy: A Critique".
 - Bertrand Russell "Our Sexual Ethics".
- Famine

- Peter Singer "Famine, Affluence, and Morality".
- Genetic Engineering
 - Heidi Ledford "Riding the CRISPR Wave".
 - Michael J. Sandel. "The Case Against Perfection".
 - Matt Ridley "The New Eugenics".

WEEK 12 - 14: Social Justice

- Rawls
 - John Rawls *A Theory of Justice*, Chap 1.
- Nozick
 - Robert Nozick "Anarchy, State, and Utopia", Chap 7.
- Quotas
 - Antonin Scalia "The Disease as Cure: "In Order to Get Beyond Racism, We Must First Take Account of Race"".
 - Sheen S. Levine and David Stark "Diversity Makes You Brighter".
 - James Rachels "In Defense of Quotas".