

Instructor: Kevin Patton
Course: PHIL 3050
Day: Tues / Thurs
Time: 1430 - 1545
Location: DSC 254

<https://kevinpatton.com>
UNO Philosophy
Office: ASH 205F
Office Hours: Tues & Thurs 1300 -
1400

Ethical Theory

“My desire and wish is that the things I start with should be so obvious that you wonder why I spend my time stating them. This is what I aim at because the point of philosophy is to start with something so simple as not to seem worth stating, and to end with something so paradoxical that no one will believe it.”

Bertrand Russell from *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism* 1918.

Course Overview

A detailed examination of selected topics in normative ethics and/or metaethics. Normative ethical questions to consider may include: Is the morally right thing to do always the thing that has the best consequences, as so-called "consequentialists" believe? What sorts of things are intrinsically good, i.e., good in themselves, regardless of their effects? Metaethical questions to be considered may include: Are there any objective moral facts? If so, where do they come from?

Required Materials

All course material will be available on my website (kevinpatton.com)

Course Information

Preparation: This course may be very challenging for you if you are not accustomed to reasoning in a rigorous fashion. If this is true of you, then you will only do well in this class if you dedicate much of your outside-of-class-time to practicing and mastering the relevant topics covered. Also, the only dumb questions are the ones you don't ask. If you are confused about something, then there is a high likelihood that someone else is too!

Attendance: Attendance is required.

Website: All course material, including the textbook, will be available exclusively on my website. I do **not** use other services. The site URL is: <https://kevinjpatton.github.io/>

Distribution: This course is required for a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy at UNO. The full list of requirements can be found at:

<https://catalog.unomaha.edu/undergraduate/college-arts-sciences/philosophy/philosophy-ba/>

Evaluation

Grading Scale

A+	96.7 - 100%	C+	76.7 - 79.9%
A	93.3 - 96.6%	C	73.3 - 76.6%
A-	90 - 93.2%	C-	70 - 73.2%
B+	86.7 - 89.9	D+	66.7 - 69.9
B	83.3 - 86.6%	D	63.3 - 66.6%
B-	80 - 83.2%	D-	60 - 63.2%

F
Below 60%

Participation: 10%
Short Paper 1: 15%
Short Paper 2: 15%
Student Lead Discussion: 20%
Final Paper: 40%

Participation: Class discussion is an essential component of a well designed philosophy class. Class discussions can be challenging for certain students who feel unsure of the material, or are not confident in their ability to formulate articulate sentences. You should seek to engage the material and develop the skill associated with translating thoughts into words - that is an essential skill for a philosopher!

Short Papers 1&2: In addition to the final paper, there will be two short papers due over the course of the semester. These papers will be direct responses to one of the readings that we have done thus far in the course. One of these two papers may be the basis for your final paper.

Student Lead Discussion: Each of you will sign up for a specific date during the semester. Your task will be to lead a 15 - 30 minutes discussion of the reading assigned for that day. You needn't feel as though this discussion must be deeply profound or revolutionary. So long as you isolate the author's main claim (thesis) and can offer some critical analysis of the argument that they use to justify their main claim, then this should be enough to spark an edifying discussion.

Final Paper: A final paper will be due by the end of the semester. This paper constitutes 40% of your grade in the class. In general, such papers require you to properly explain a position / argument, followed by a sustained critique of the position / argument. There will be a rubric, followed by guidelines for the paper as we get closer to the end of the semester. In addition to the paper, there will be a short but corresponding presentation that you will give the class at the end of the semester.

Lateness Policy: For every day that an assignment is late, there will be a 10% lateness penalty on that assignment.

Policies

- **Academic Integrity:** The penalty for academic dishonesty (e.g., collaborating on problem sets, cheating on exams) will be failure of the course and the case's being forwarded to Student Judicial Affairs for possible disciplinary action. Make yourself familiar with UNO's Student Code of Conduct, available [online](#). **In this course, the normal penalty for any violation of the code is an "F" for the semester.** Violations may have additional consequences including expulsion from the university. Don't plagiarize – it just isn't worth it.

- **University Policies:** I respect and uphold university policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing impaired students; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective university regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to the attention of the instructor.

- **ADA:** In compliance with University policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that may be required for students with disabilities. Students are encouraged to register with Student Disability Services to verify their eligibility for appropriate accommodations.

- **Misc.:** Please turn off cell phones, beeping watches, and other gadgets that make noise before entering our classroom. Absolutely no texting is permitted during class. I will subtract up to five points from your participation grade each and every time your phone rings or I see you texting during class.

Further Resources

- Jargon: It's important to be on top of the technical terms used by philosophers. Please ask for clarification of terms in class. You can also consult Jim Pryor's online "[Philosophical Terms and Methods](#)." This is less important in this class than in more 'normal' philosophy classes, but it may help.
- Reference: The [Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) is an excellent online resource, though entries can be lengthy. The [Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy](#) has shorter entries, but it is not as scholarly.
- I may post some additional readings on my website if the assigned reading does not explain something with sufficient clarity.

Assignment Calendar

Day 1	Introduction	Day 22	
Day 2	Royal Institute: Moral Philosophy: Ch 1	Day 23	
Day 3	Schroeder: Lang & ME	Day 24	
Day 4	VT: Ch 1	Day 25	
Day 5	VT: Ch 2	Day 26	
Day 6	VT: Ch 3	Day 27	
Day 7	VT: Ch 11	Day 28	
Day 8	VT: Ch 12	Day 29	
Day 9	Rønnow-Rasmussen: Instrumental Values; Short Paper 1 Due	Day 30	
Day 10	Schroeder: Cudsworth and Normative Explanation	Day 31	
Day 11	Schroeder: The Scope of Instrumental Reason	Day 32	Flex Day
Day 12		Day 33	Final Paper Due / Flex Day
Day 13			
Day 14	Short Paper 2 Due		
Day 15			
Day 16			
Day 17			
Day 18			
Day 19			
Day 20			
Day 21			