

Instructor: Kevin Patton
Course: PHIL 1020
Location: The Internet

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UNO Philosophy
Office Hours: By Appt

Contemporary Moral Problems

“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

Introduction to the application of basic moral concepts and theories to contemporary moral issues. Discussion topics will vary but will be focused on what it means to be a moral agent on the internet.

Required Materials

No textbook required. All course material will be available on my website: kevinjpatton.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 enough 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. Lmao. It's the internet.

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Website: All course material will be available exclusively on my website. I do **not** use Canvas to post material other than the syllabus. The site URL is: <https://kevinjpatton.github.io/>

Distribution: This course helps to satisfy the Humanities and Fine Arts General Education course requirement used by UNO. The Humanities & Fine Arts courses seek to help students understand, analyze, and explore the human condition. Studying Humanities & Fine Arts contributes to personal growth and well-being, as well as to living in, and contributing to various communities. Passing this class means that you will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the theories, methods, and concepts used to comprehend and respond to the human condition; to recognize, articulate, and explore how various humanists/artists have responded to the human condition; to comprehend and evaluate how humanistic/artistic expression contributes to individual and/or socio-cultural understanding, growth, and well-being; and use relevant critical, analytic, creative, speculative and/or reflective methods. More information can be found at:

<https://www.unomaha.edu/general-education/approved-courses/humanities-and-fine-arts.php>

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%

Project 1: 15%
Project 2: 20%
“Reading” Responses: 40%
Final Project: 25%

Projects: Given that our class is just one month long, I must have a unique way for assessing your growth in this class. Project 1 will be due at the end of week two; project 2 at the end of week 3; and the final project at the end of the class. The content and purpose of each project will be given in a separate handout, but as you can see by the weight of each assignment, doing well on the projects is essential to doing well in the class.

“Reading” Responses: There will be daily reading / watching / listening assignments. You will be required to write a one paragraph summary of each day’s content which you will submit through Canvas. Canvas will be coupled with a plagiarism scanner so do your own work.

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.

Content Calendar

Week 1: Researching

- June 1** How does Google work?
- June 2** What makes an article good?
- June 3** Snopes and Wikipedia
- June 4** YouTube and Censorship

- June 5** Conspiracy Theories

Week 2: Conspiracies

- June 8** Plandemic
- June 9** Debunking
- June 10** Anti-Vaxxers
- June 11** Mercury
- June 12** Consequences of bad science

Week 3: Big Data

- June 15** What is 'Big Data'?
- June 16** Private Sector Use
- June 17** Public Sector Use
- June 18** Edward Snowden
- June 19** Julian Assange

Week 4: Manipulating the Internet

- June 22** Who Uses Page 2?
- June 23** Why are so many apps free?
- June 24** Net Neutrality
- June 25** EULAs
- June 26** Cookies

Week 5: Video Games

- June 29** Real world consequences
- June 30** Gamergate revisited
- July 1** Pro Gamers
- July 2** The Business of Creating a Game