

Philosophy 2320: Introduction to Ethics
Spring 2020
Section H02: Tue/Thu 9:30-10:50
Eng/Phil 260

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Course Description

How should we live? What is a good life? Ought I to forgo my own interests for the interests of another? Is it sometimes permissible to kill innocent human beings? Is it permissible to kill animals for food? Ethical philosophy attempts to answer these sorts of questions through reason and reflection. Within current ethical philosophy, there are three major schools of thought on how these sorts of questions should be answered, utilitarianism, virtue theory, and deontology. While each of these attempts to shed light on all of these questions merely through reason and reflection, each of them arrives at very different answers to these questions. In this class, we will investigate utilitarianism, deontology, and virtue theory in some detail by closely reading both the founding texts of each of the ethical theories as well as reading some modern re-interpretations and criticisms. In addition, in the last part of the class, we will seek to apply these theories to two test cases: abortion and animal rights. The application to test cases should both shed light on our intuitions about these morally contested issues but also shed light on the ethical theories themselves.

Language, Philosophy, and Culture:

This course satisfies the Texas Tech University core curriculum requirement in Language, Philosophy, and Culture. As such this course shares the goals of the Language, Philosophy and Culture requirement: “courses in this core component area focus on how ideas, values, beliefs, and other aspects of culture reflect and affect human experience. Courses involve the exploration of ideas that foster aesthetic and intellectual creation in order to understand the human condition across cultures.” (TTU Course Catalog)

General Competency Statement:

“Students graduating from Texas Tech University should be able to think critically and evaluate possible multiple interpretations, cultural and historical contexts, and values.” (TTU Course Catalog)

General Learning Objectives for Language, Philosophy, and Culture Core Courses:

- Critical Thinking Skills.
- Communication Skills.
- Teamwork or Personal Responsibility.
- Social Responsibility.

Specific Learning Outcomes*

- To gain an overview of positions within normative ethical theory. (I,II/III/IV/V)
- To improve student’s ability to read and think critically about difficult texts. (IV)
- To improve student’s ability to articulate and defend their ethical intuitions. (I)
- To gain familiarity with each of the three major normative theories and understand their historical origins. (IV)
- To improve student’s ability to develop analytical arguments in written and/or oral form. (I,IV)

* The roman numerals in parentheses refer to the following means of assessment.

Means of Assessment*

I. Class Participation	50 pts	(5%)
II. Midterm I	75 pts	(7.5%)
III. Midterm II	175 pts	(17.5%)
IV. Midterm III	200 pts	(20%)
V. Weekly Homework Assignments (10 out of 14)	150 pts (15 pts each)	(15%)
VI. Final Exam	350 pts	(35%)

Grades will be awarded according to following chart:

Grade	Pts	Grade	Pts	Grade	Pts
A	930-999	B-	800-829	D+	670-699
A-	900-929	C+	770-799	D	630-669
B+	870-899	C	730-769	D-	600-629
B	830-869	C-	700-729	F	0-599

*NOTE: Failure to complete any part of the course is grounds for failure from the class.

Required Texts:

- (1) Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Wordsworth Classics. Translated by Rackham
- (2) Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Hackett. Translated by James Ellington
- (3) Mill, *Utilitarianism*. Hackett, edited by George Sher.
- (4) Course packet with supplemental readings. This is available for purchase at Copy Outlet at 2402 Broadway. Note since the majority of the readings are derived from this packet it is crucial that you purchase it.

A Note on the Course Readings:

Reading philosophy is more difficult than most other kinds of reading. Glancing through the syllabus, you will notice there are almost always fewer than 35 pages of reading per week. Most weeks are about 25 pages per week. This is considerably less reading than your average humanities class. Nevertheless, you will find that to do this reading properly, it will take you at least as long as it does to complete reading 3 times as long. This is because reading philosophy is quite hard. Although I do not expect each student to have understood every sentence of the reading, I do expect students to have made a serious attempt to understand the reading before coming to class. So what counts as a serious attempt? A serious attempt varies for each person and each text, but it rarely involves one casual read. Often it will involve at least two reads, once for general gist and overall claims, and a more careful read in which attention is paid to how the author justifies the claims and whether you the reader find these justifications plausible. There may be some philosophers who can read and understand philosophy without taking notes, but most of us require careful underlining and notes.

To aid you with your readings, weekly reading questions will be emailed to you. These questions are not designed to test whether you have “done” the reading in the sense of passed your eyes over each word. Rather, the questions are meant to assist you in your attempt to think philosophically about the reading. Answering these questions is *very* demanding, and you should expect to spend all week completing them. Each Tuesday, I will collect a few of these questions for grading. You can find out which questions will be collected because they will be in bold on the homework. After listening to class discussions, you may rewrite these questions and resubmit them on Friday by 5pm. If you chose to submit a rewrite, the rewrite alone will determine your grade. You may only submit a rewrite if you submit an original homework on Tuesday.

Requirements:

- 3 Midterms composed of several short answer questions. Many of these questions will be pulled directly from the reading guides.
- 1 Final Exam which will also be short answer.
- 14 Homework Assignments: At the beginning of each week (more or less), a homework will be collected. The homework will consist of selected problems from a reading guide. Although only

the selected problems will be turned in and graded, I strongly recommend answering each of the problems from the reading guide. All the reading guides are available in advance. Each student is allowed to drop her 4 lowest homework grades. In addition, it is possible to turn in re-writes of the homework on Thursday of the week that they are due. These re-writes will count in lieu of the original homework provided you have received a sufficient grade on the original homework demonstrating that you have made a serious effort.

Disability Statement from OP 34.22:

“Any student who, because of a disability, may require special arrangements in order to meet the course requirements should contact the instructor as soon as possible to make any necessary arrangements. Students should present appropriate verification from Student Disability Services during the instructor’s office hours. Please note: instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from Student Disability Services has been provided. For additional information, please contact Student Disability Services in West Hall or call 806-742-2405.”

Academic Integrity Statement:

I refer all infractions to Student Judicial Programs without exception. Please familiarize yourself with TTU’s statement on academic integrity and come speak with me if you have any questions:

<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/studentjudicialprograms/academicinteg.php#>

Plagiarism is the most common integrity violation that I encounter, and in many of these cases, the student claims that she was unaware that what she was doing counted as plagiarism. Plagiarism occurs when a student presents someone else's work as her own, whether this work comes from a friend, a printed source, or the internet. This means that plagiarism can never occur if something is properly cited because then it is not presented as your own. Changing a few words does not preclude plagiarism. If you have any questions about plagiarism please see me.

Religious Holy Day Statement:

The university defines a religious holy day as follows: “‘Religious holy day’ means a holy day observed by a religion whose places of worship are exempt from property taxation under Texas Code §11.20.” According to the university policy, no student may be penalized for missing a class, assignment or exam due to the observance of such a holy day. If observing such a holy day will cause you to miss class, please let me know in advance and in writing (email will do).

Attendance Policy:

Class attendance is required. Please come to class on time and prepared. Each student is allowed 4 absences for the entire semester. I will assume that your reason for missing class is a serious one so there is no need to email me to explain. However, any absence after the 4th will lead to a penalty of 1/3 of a letter grade to your overall class grade for each day missed. For example, if you miss 5 days but have aced the entire class, your grade will drop from an A to an A-, if you miss 6 days it will drop to a B+, etc. If you have an excused absence please bring supporting documentations.

Tardiness: Attendance will be taken when I arrive in class. If you arrive after I call your name, you will be marked late. Being late three times amounts to an absence.

Lecture Dos and Don'ts

Do the reading before class.

Do bring your book to lecture.

Do buy your book ASAP.

Do listen to each other and not just me.

Don't text or use cell phones in class. (Cell phones should not even be in visible. If I see a cell phone I will ask you to leave the class.)

Don't use your laptops or Ipads to take notes unless you are sitting in the front row.

Schedule of Readings

Abbreviations and symbols

*= in packet

Week	Dates	Readings	Assignments
I	Jan 16 th		None
II	Jan 21, 23	Sumner, "A Defense of Cultural Relativism"* Gensler, "Cultural Relativism"* Enoch, "Why I am an Objectivist about Ethics (And Why You Are, Too)" *	HW #1- Jan 21 Re-write – 5 pm, Jan 24
III	Jan 28, 30	Feinberg, "Psychological Egoism"* Rand, "The Virtue of Selfishness"*	HW #2 – Jan 28 Re-write – 5pm Jan 31
IV	Feb 4, 6	Shafer-Landau, "Morality and Religion"*	HW #3 – Feb 4 MIDTERM #1: Feb 6th Re-write – 5pm Feb 7 th
V	Feb 11, 13	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> (1-34)	HW #4– Feb 11 Re-write – 5pm, Feb 14
VI	Feb 18, 20	Hospers, "Rule-Utilitarianism"* Petit, "Consequentialism"* Nielsen "Against Moral Conservatism" *	HW #5 – Feb 18 Re-write – 5pm, Feb 21
VII	Feb 25, 27	Kant, <i>Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (7-17) (23—33)	HW #6- Feb 25 Re-write – 5pm, Feb 28
VIII	Mar 3, 5	Kant, <i>Groundwork...</i> (36-44) Hill, "Humanity as an End in Itself"*	HW #7 – Mar 3 MIDTERM #2 – Mar 5th Re-write – 5pm, Mar 6 ^h
IX	Mar 10, 12	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (Book I, chapters 1-13, p 1-21, excluding Book I: chapter 6)	HW #8 – Mar 10 Re-write – 5pm, Mar 13
X	Mar 24, 26	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (Book II, chapter 1-7; Book III, chapter 6-9; Book IV, chapter 3)	HW #9 –Mar 24 Re-write – 5pm, Mar 27
XI	Mar 31, Apr 2	Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism"* Parfit, "From <i>Reasons and Persons</i> "*	HW #10 – Mar 31 Re-write – 5pm, Apr 3
XII	Apr 7, 9	Nagel, "War and Massacre"* Nozick, "Side Constraints"*	HW #11 – Apr 7 MIDTERM #3 –Apr 9th Re-write – 5pm, Apr 10
XIII	Apr 14, 16	Foot, "Virtues and Vices" Hursthouse, "Aristotle's <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> "*	HW #12 –Apr 14 Re-write – 5pm, Apr 17
XIV	Apr 21, 23	Marquis, "An Argument that Abortion is Wrong" * Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" * Hursthouse "Virtue Theory and Abortion"*	HW #13—Apr 21 Re-write – 5pm, Apr 24th
XV	Apr 28, 30	Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights" * Cohen, "The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research"*	HW #14—Apr 28 Rewrite—5pm, May 1
XVI	May 5th	Review	
XVII	May 8 th	FINAL EXAM	Friday May 8 th 7:30 am