

PHIL 1104 - Philosophy and Social Ethics

Fall 2014

Lecture and Contact Information

Class: PHIL 1104-037
Lecture Times: T/TH 3:30-4:45PM
Room: Bronwell 124
External Site: LINK

Instructor: Nathan Kellen
Email: nathan.kellen@uconn.edu
Office: Manchester Hall 228
Office Hours: T/TH 2:00-3:00PM

Course Description

Ethics, the study of what we owe to others, is one of the most fundamental areas of inquiry in human life. All of us reason ethically often throughout our lives, both with and without realising it. This class will examine the three major aspects of ethical theory: *metaethics*, the study of ethical reasoning itself, *normative ethics*, the study of how we ought to reason ethically or do ethically and *applied ethics*, the application of normative ethical theory to substantive issues.

Course Objectives

This course is designed as a “toolkit” course - a course which gives students the theoretical tools of a certain discipline and then teaches them to apply said tools to various issues. The course is designed with three purposes in mind: learn to do philosophy well, reason well and live well by applying the lessons learned to issues in your own lives. The tools in this course, plus their applications, will fulfil these three objectives by giving you a solid background in contemporary analytic ethical philosophy and training you to reason ethically about issues relevant to human life. Students will also gain the ability to write concise, well-reasoned analytical opinion essays.

Course Readings

The course readings, listed in the schedule and bibliography below, can be found in two places. Firstly, all of them can be accessed by logging into the course’s HuskyCT page and going to the “Library Resources” tab. Some of the readings can be accessed via links at the course page on my website here; note however that not all of the readings are available copyright free online, and you will have to go to the HuskyCT course for some of them.

Please note also that the following readings are selections or translations: [Mackie, 2012], [Williams, 1973], [Kant, 2003], [Rawls, 2012] and [Marquis, 2012]. It is very important that you read the exact versions I have assigned - they were picked with your best interests (e.g. readability, length) in mind.

Course Assignments and Grades

In this course you will be evaluated via multiple methods. The grading scheme is as follows:

- **Participation:** 10%
- **Quizzes:** 30%
- **Midterm Test:** 25%
- **Final Paper:** 35%

Participation

Participation is earned by coming to class, prepared and ready to participate with your fellow students and your instructor in a shared intellectual conversation. Philosophy is often a collaborative process: I may posit a position, which you object to, and then another person defends. Engaging in philosophical discussion is an essential part of honing your reasoning skills and doing philosophy well. In order to earn the full participation grade students must not have many absences, must participate in class discussion and be respectful in discussions to their fellow interlocutors.

Quizzes

There will be 12-13 quizzes over the semester. Each quiz will test your knowledge of the materials and lecture, their background theory and their applications via a series of multiple-choice and true-false questions. Quizzes will be available via the HuskyCT site Friday 12:00AM and lasting until Friday 11:59PM (i.e. all day Friday).

There is a quiz each week except for the week of the midterm. The class, as a whole, has the ability to waive the final week's quiz, if more than 75% of the class takes the completely confidential course evaluation offered by the university and inaccessible by me until two weeks after grades are submitted.

Midterm Test

The midterm is a cumulative assessment of all the theoretical aspects of the course. Designed to be similar to the quizzes taken in the previous weeks, it will be administered in class on **Thursday 30 October**, rather than via HuskyCT.

Final Paper

The final paper is the student's opportunity to apply the theoretical tools learned in the first two parts of the course to the issues discussed in the third part of the course. In writing the paper, students not only learn how to do philosophy well and apply it to their lives by themselves, but also how to reason well and write short, analytical papers.

Papers will be roughly 1500 words (5 double-spaced pages) and be an application of one of the four theories learned in Part Two of the course, to one of the three topics covered in Part Three. This gives the student approximately 24 options for the paper: one for each theory applied to each issue, for and against. Note however that not all of these options are made equal - some theories do not lend well to certain positions, no matter how hard one might try.

Because writing is an important, yet often difficult, process, the paper process will be composed of three parts:

1. **Paper Topic:** Due by 11:59PM 20 November **REQUIRED**
2. **Paper Draft:** Due by 11:59PM 28 November **OPTIONAL**
3. **Paper Final:** Due by 11:59PM 11 December **REQUIRED**

Each student will turn in a paper topic to me, via email, by the due date describing which theory, issue and position they will be taking in roughly a paragraph's length. This will help me ensure that students are on the right track as far as the philosophical issues go, and do not waste time going down the wrong track. For one example of a paper topic see below:

In my paper I will explain how Kant's deontological ethics determines torture to be impermissible. This explanation will turn on the fact that the act of torturing individuals violates multiple of the formulations of the Categorical Imperative, including most importantly the Formula of Humanity.

Every student has the opportunity to turn in a paper draft to me, via email, by the due date as well. This is a strictly optional step, but one I recommend. Philosophical writing is generally foreign and difficult to students, more akin to writing a lab report than an English essay. Tips on writing philosophy papers can be found at the course site.

The final paper must be turned in via HuskyCT (n.b. **not** via email), by the due date. All papers will automatically be ran through the SafeAssign system used by the university.

All papers must be turned in as .pdf's, named in the following format: '[LastName] 1104.pdf', obviously without the brackets. Papers must be turned in this format due to the commenting software I use.

Late Policy

My late policy is rather simple: don't attempt to turn things in late. The course is scheduled to optimise the student's time at the cost of my own. Paper topics are not due until almost eight hours after the last relevant lecture, paper drafts are due well into Thanksgiving break and final papers are due at the last possible time that allows me enough time to grade and submit before the deadline.

If your paper is late you will be docked one full letter grade (e.g. a 'B' paper would now receive a 'C') for each day your paper is late. There are no partial days in this count and anything after 11:59PM on the due date is considered late. There are no late quizzes accepted.

If you need an extension it is always best to appeal to me well before the due-date; pleas for extensions don't work well as excuses for lateness. Extensions will only be granted in extenuating circumstances.

Email Contact

During the academic year I get roughly 50 emails a day, not including any emails from students. In order to make sure that I receive your email and can respond in a timely fashion (usually within 24 hours), please make sure the subject of every email is **PHIL 1104: [your topic here]**. Feel free to email me any minor questions you have; if your question is more substantial, please stop by my office hours to get help instead.

Office Hours

As your instructor, my aim is to help you do as well in this course as you want to do. The bulk of that aim is accomplished through lecture. My office hours are another place for you learn, but instead via one-on-one instruction. I encourage students to attend my office hours with any and all questions, as much as they need to or find helpful. My office hours are set aside time in my schedule with the express purpose of providing help to students - you are not in any way infringing upon my work or personal time by coming to office hours, so don't be shy.

If you cannot make it to my office hours, please do not go without the help you need! Contact me via email and we will set up an appointment that works for the both of us.

As a final note, office hours need not be used only for class purposes. I encourage students to stop by for any reason they'd like, including but not limited to: learning about other areas of ethics or philosophy, chatting about academic topics in general, music, comic book movies (of which I am an ardent fan), etc. I am also a trained Husky Ally (for GLBTQ*) for those in need.

Plagiarism Policy

Cheating is reprehensible. Cheating in a course on *ethics* is particularly reprehensible. Do not do it. Any case of plagiarism (that is, representing someone else's work as your own) results in an automatic failure in the entire course, as well as a report to the Office of Community Standards, which can impose penalties up to and including expulsion. You can find UConn's policy on academic policy here.

Note that failing to cite work is itself plagiarism. Be sure to follow the citation guidelines described in the paper requirements, available on HuskyCT and the external site, to avoid (unintentionally) plagiarising others.

Disability Policy

I'm an adamant supporter of the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD). Those with CSD-recognised disabilities (e.g. extra test-taking time, note-taking assistance) should contact me as soon as possible with the requisite forms so we can set that up together with CSD.

Reading and Lecture Schedule

Year Zero: Introductions

Week One - Introduction to Philosophy, Ethics and Logic

August 26th	Introductions, Syllabus and Intro to Philosophy	No Readings
August 28th	Introduction to Philosophical Reasoning	No Readings

Part One: Metaethics

Week Two - Moral Realism and Secular Morality

September 2nd	Moral Realism and Moral Nonnaturalism	[Shafer-Landau, 2012]
September 4th	Secular Morality	[Brink, 2006]

Week Three - Moral Scepticism and Alternative Moral Foundations

September 9th	Scepticism about Morality	[Mackie, 2012]
September 11th	Constructivism about Morality	[Street, 2010]

Week Four - Relativism and Absolutism

September 16th	Cultural Relativism	[Rachels, 2003]
September 18th	Substantial Moral Relativism	[Enoch, 2014]

Part Two: Normative Ethics

Week Five - Classical Consequentialism

September 23rd	Mill's Utilitarianism	[Mill, 2010, Ch. 1-2]
September 25th	Mill cont'd	[Mill, 2010, Ch. 1-2]

Week Six - Modern Consequentialism and Objections

September 30th	Extreme and Restricted Consequentialism	[Smart, 2012]
October 2nd	Objections to Consequentialism	[Williams, 1973, §3-5]

Week Seven - Kantian Deontology

October 7th	Introduction to Kant	[Kant, 2003, Preface, Ch. 1]
October 9th	The Good Will	[Kant, 2003, Preface, Ch. 1]

Week Eight - Kant: Part Deux

October 14th	Categorical vs. Hypothetical Imperatives	[Kant, 2003, Ch. 2]
October 16th	The Four Formulations of the Categorical Imperative	[Kant, 2003, Ch. 2]

Week Nine - Modern Deontology and Objections

October 21st	Rawls' Political and Moral Theory	[Rawls, 2012]
October 23rd	Objections to Deontology	[Thomson, 1985]

Week Ten - MIDTERM

October 28th	Midterm Review	Bring Questions Written Down
October 30th	MIDTERM	No Readings

Part Three: Applied Ethics

Week Eleven - Abortion

November 4th	Thomson on Abortion	[Thomson, 1971]
November 6th	Marquis on Abortion	[Marquis, 2012]

Week Twelve - Animal Rights

November 11th	A Consequentialist Approach to Animal Rights	[Singer, 2011]
November 13th	A Kantian Approach to Animal Rights	[Korsgaard, 2013]

Week Thirteen - Euthanasia

November 18th	Active vs. Passive Euthanasia	[Rachels, 1996]
November 20th	A Kantian Approach to Euthanasia	[Velleman, 1992]
November 20th	PAPER TOPIC	DUE BY 11:59PM

THANKSGIVING BREAK

November 24th-28th	BREAK	No Readings
November 28th	PAPER DRAFT	DUE BY 11:59PM

Week Fourteen - And Now for Something Completely Different

December 2nd	Sex and Consent	[Dougherty, 2013]
December 4th	or Evolution and Morality	or [Street, 2014]

FINALS WEEK

December 11th | FINAL PAPER | DUE BY 11:59PM

References

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- [Kant, 2003] Kant, I. (2003). *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press.
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