

PHIL 1104 - Philosophy and Social Ethics

Fall 2016

Lecture and Contact Information

Class: PHIL 1104-034

Lecture Times: T/TH 9:30-10:45AM

Room: Laurel Hall 106

External Site: TBA

Instructor: Nathan Kellen

Email: nathan.kellen@uconn.edu

Office: Manchester Hall 228

Office Hours: T 11:00AM-12:00PM; 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. Given that this semester coincides with a US Presidential Election, we will pay particular attention to contemporary political and ethical 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 ethical philosophy and training you to reason ethically about issues relevant to human life.

Course Readings

Most of the readings from this course are found in the **required textbook**, Russ Shafer-Landau’s *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems*, **3rd edition**. **The third edition is required - you will be missing assigned readings if you purchase one of the other editions.** The book can be purchased from from Amazon [here](#).

Those readings which are *not* in the required textbook I will put online at the HuskyCT site, and (when copyright provides) on the course website hosted by me.

Course Assignments and Grades

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

- **Participation:** 15%
- **Weekly Writing Assignments:** 35%
- **Midterm Test:** 25%
- **Final Test:** 25%

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. **It is a necessary requirement of this course that you read the assigned readings before the lecture.**

Assignments

Each week (apart from the week of the midterm and possibly the final week) there will be a short writing assignment. Assignments will be given out by midnight Friday and due by 11:59PM Sunday. Late quizzes and assignments will not be accepted.

Short writing assignments will test your understanding of the material and your ability to apply the knowledge you have learned. I will give you at least one topic/question and you will write a short response (about 500 words). Writing assignments will be graded on your grasp of the material, the strength of your arguments and the clarity of your writing.

The class, as a whole, has the ability to waive the final week's assignment, 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. If 90% of the course takes the course evaluation the final week's quiz/assignment will be optional extra credit.

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, October 6th**.

Final Test

The final test is a cumulative assessment of all the applied aspects of the course (i.e. it does **not** cover the material on the midterm). Designed to be similar to the quizzes taken in the previous weeks, it will be administered at the assigned final exam time/date/room (TBA).

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 (even unintentionally) plagiarising others. In this course I will not allow you to quote authors; you will need to paraphrase instead, which requires citation just as quoting does. Failure to paraphrase correctly is a case of plagiarism, even if unintentional.

Other activities that constitute plagiarism include copying off others assignments or tests, buying or selling papers or answers to assignments or tests, working with others on assignments, as well as anything else classified as academic misconduct by the UConn Student Code. Please note that the passive forms of all of these activities (e.g. letting someone copy off your assignment or test) are considered plagiarism to the same degree that the active forms.

Disability Policy

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

Reading and Lecture Schedule

Week One - Introduction to Philosophy, Ethics and Philosophical Reasoning

August 30th	Introductions, Syllabus and Intro to Philosophy	No Readings
September 1st	Introduction to Philosophical Reasoning	No Readings

PART ONE - MORAL THEORY

Metaethics and Normative Ethics

Week Two - Relativism and Realism

September 6th	Cultural Relativism	[Gensler 2014]
September 8th	Moral Realism	[Enoch 2014]

Week Three - Utilitarianism

September 13th	Pleasure and Utility	[Mill 2014]
September 15th	Act and Rule Utilitarianism	[Smart 2014]

Week Four - Critiquing Utilitarianism and Deontological Ethics

September 20th	Objections to Utilitarianism	[Nozick 2014], [Harris 2014]
September 22nd	Introduction to Kantianism: The ULF	[Kant 2014]

Week Five - Kantian Deontology and Objections to Kantianism

September 27th	Introduction to Kantianism: The HF	[Kant 2014], [Hay 2013]
September 29th	Objections to Kantianism	[Thomson 1985]

Week Six - MIDTERM

October 4th	Midterm Review	Bring Questions Written Down
October 6th	MIDTERM	Study!

PART TWO - APPLIED ETHICS

Classic and Contemporary Issues

Week Seven - Abortion

October 11th	The Right to Abortion	[Thomson 2014]
October 13th	The Impermissibility of Abortion	[Marquis 2014]

Week Eight - Charity and Sweatshops

October 18th	The Obligation to Give to Charity	[Singer 2014], [O'Neill 2012]
October 20th	The Ethics of Sweatshop Consumption	[Zwolinski 2006]

Week Nine - Torture and The Right to Privacy

October 25th	Torture	[Shue 1978]
October 27th	The Right to Privacy	[Lynch 2013]

Week Ten - Privilege, Gender and Race

November 1st	Privilege and Gender	[Frye 2000]
November 3rd	Privilege and Race	[McIntosh 1989]

Week Eleven - Euthanasia

November 8th	ELECTION DAY - NO CLASS	VOTE!
November 10th	Euthanasia	[Rachels 1996], [Rachels 2014]

Week Twelve - Animal Rights

November 15th	Animal Welfare and Utilitarianism	[Norcross 2014]
November 17th	A Kantian Approach to Animal Rights	[Korsgaard 2013]

Week Thirteen - Contemporary Political Issues

November 29th	Animal Rights and Human Rights	[Frey 2014]
December 1st	Against Animal Rights	[Kant 2012], [Narveson 1999]

Week Fourteen - Sexual Consent

December 6th	Seduction and Consent	[Conly, 2004]
December 8th	Deception and Consent	[Dougherty 2013]

References

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