

PHIL 1104 - Philosophy and Social Ethics

Spring 2015

Lecture and Contact Information

Class: PHIL 1104-037

Lecture Times: T/TH 12:30-1:45PM

Room: Family Studies 216

External Site: [LINK](#)

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.

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.

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 the UConn Co-Op, or from Amazon (likely for cheaper) [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%
- **Quizzes:** 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.**

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 open via the HuskyCT site on Friday 12:00AM and close after Friday 11:59PM (i.e. you will have 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. If 90% of the course takes the course evaluation the final week's quiz 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, March 5th**, rather than via HuskyCT.

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.

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. 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 cheating, even if unintentional.

Other activities that constitute plagiarism include copying off others assignments, quizzes or tests (including those taken out of class online), buying or selling papers or answers to quizzes or tests, working with others on assignments, quizzes, tests and papers, 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, quiz or test) are considered plagiarism to the same degree that the active forms are as well.

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

Week One - Introduction to Philosophy, Ethics and Logic

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|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| January 20th | Introductions, Syllabus and Intro to Philosophy | No Readings |
| January 22nd | Introduction to Philosophical Reasoning | No Readings |

PART ONE - MORAL THEORY

Metaethics and Normative Ethics

Week Two - Relativism and Realism

| | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| January 27th | Cultural Relativism | [Gensler, 2014] |
| January 29th | Moral Realism | [Enoch, 2014] |

Week Three - Secular Morality; Utilitarianism

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|---------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| February 3rd | Secular Morality | [Brink, 2006] |
| February 5th | Act and Rule Utilitarianism | [Smart, 2014] |

Week Four - Understanding and Critiquing Utilitarianism

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|----------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| February 10th | Pleasure and Utility | [Mill, 2014], [Nozick, 2014] |
| February 12th | Objections to Consequentialism | [Harris, 2014] |

Week Five - Kantian Deontology

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|----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| February 17th | Introduction to Kantianism | [Kant, 2014] |
| February 19th | Kantianism cont'd | [Kant, 2014], [Hay, 2013] |

Week Six - Modern Deontology and Objections

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|----------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| February 24th | Rawlsian Moral Theory | [Rawls, 2012] |
| February 26th | Objections to Deontology | [Thomson, 1985] |

Week Seven - MIDTERM

| | | |
|------------------|----------------|-------------------------------------|
| March 3rd | Midterm Review | Bring Questions Written Down |
| March 5th | MIDTERM | Study! |

PART TWO - APPLIED ETHICS

Classic and Contemporary Issues

Week Eight - Abortion

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| March 10th | The Right to Abortion | [Thomson, 2014] |
| March 12th | The Impermissibility of Abortion | [Marquis, 2014] |

SPRING BREAK

Week Nine - Euthanasia

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| March 24th | The Permissibility of Euthanasia | [Rachels, 1996], [Rachels, 2014] |
| March 26th | Against the Right to Euthanasia | [Velleman, 1992] |

Week Ten - Charity

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------------|------------------|
| March 31st | The Obligation to Give | [Singer, 2014] |
| April 2nd | Against Charity | [Narveson, 2014] |

Week Eleven - Animal Rights

| | | |
|------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| April 7th | A Consequentialist Approach to Animal Rights | [Norcross, 2014] |
| April 9th | A Kantian Approach to Animal Rights | [Korsgaard, 2013] |

Week Twelve - Animal Rights cont'd and Contemporary Political Issues

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| April 14th | Against Equal Rights for Animals | [Frey, 2014] |
| April 16th | Drone Warfare | [Carroll, 2012], [Strawser, 2012] |

Week Thirteen - Contemporary Political Issues cont'd

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|--------------------|
| April 21st | The Use of Torture | [Dershowitz, 2014] |
| April 23rd | The Right to Privacy | [Lynch, 2013] |

Week Fourteen - Feminist Theory and Theories of Consent

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|-------------------|-----------------|------------------------------------------------|
| April 28th | Feminist Theory | [Lorber, 1994], [McIntosh, 1989], [Frye, 2000] |
| April 30th | Sex and Consent | [Dougherty, 2013] |

References

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