

PHILOSOPHY AND SOCIAL ETHICS

Lecture and Contact Information

Class: PHIL 1104-021
Lecture Times: T/TH 9:00-12:30PM
Room: Oak Hall 301
External Site: reddit.com/r/PHIL1104SS17

Instructor: Nathan Kellen
Email: nathan.kellen@uconn.edu
Office: Manchester 227
Office Hours: T/W 1:30-2:30PM

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 is a “Summer First” course for incoming freshmen, the applied issues we will discuss will be issues related to your life as college students and young adults.

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.

In addition to training you to reason well about ethical issues this course will train you to write well. Students will learn how to write short and medium length argumentative papers, displaying their ability to argue and communicate information successfully and succinctly.

Course Readings

All of the readings will be available freely online in PDF format at the HuskyCT site. **It is a necessary requirement of this course that you read the assigned readings before the lecture.**

Course Assignments and Grades

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

- **Participation:** 34%
- **Writing Responses:** 33%
- **Final Paper:** 33%

Participation

Your participation grade is earned in two ways. The first is 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.**

The second participation evaluation is through the online discussion board found at reddit. You will be expected to participate with your peers and myself on the online discussion board, by posting questions and responses each week. Before each lecture, you must post at least one question about one of the readings *which has not already been posted*. After each lecture, you must attempt to answer at least one of these questions *which has not already been posted*. I will also post open discussion questions after each lecture, and you must reply to one of these discussion questions or to one of your peers' replies. Thus for each lecture you must post at least three discussion board posts. There will also be an open thread for any and all questions related to the readings or course, which is optional to participate in. While I will not assign grades to each discussion board post, repeated low-effort posts will earn you a lower participation grade. As in class, you will be required to be respectful in discussions with your interlocutor.

Writing Responses

The first of the two writing assignment types will be short writing responses. Short writing responses 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.

Final Paper

The second of the two writing assignment types will be a final paper, to be submitted via email on TBA. The final paper will test your understanding of the material and your ability to apply the knowledge you have learned. I will give you a choice of writing prompts and you will write a short-medium sized paper (about 1000-1500 words). The final paper will be graded on your grasp of the material, the strength of your arguments and the clarity of your writing, on a longer scale than in the short writing responses.

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

July 11th July 13th	Introductions and Philosophical Reasoning Moral Realism & Moral Relativism	No Readings Enoch & Gensler
July 18th July 20th	Utilitarianism & Deontology Animal Ethics	Mill & Kant (“The Good Will...”) Kant (“We Have...”) & Norcross & Korsgaard
July 25th July 27th	Environmental & Consumer Ethics Abortion	Sinnot-Armstrong & Zwolinski Thomson & Marquis
August 1st August 3rd	Sex and Consent Privilege, Gender and Race	Barnhill & Dougherty McIntosh & Kelly, Roeddert
August 8th August 10th	Drugs Open Topic / Writing Workshop	de Marneffe & Huemer TBD

Open Topic Options

The final day of the course will consist of one final applied ethics topic and a writing workshop. The applied ethics topic will be open and decided by the course in a blind, ranked-choice vote taken the week before on August 1st. The topics that the course may choose from are the following:

1. Charity & Poverty
2. Free Speech
3. Pornography
4. Privacy
5. Sports and Universities

Students are welcome to contact me with additional topic suggestions, but whether they will be added to the list will be left to my discretion.