



# BLHS 100 Introduction to Ethics

## SUMMER 2017

### **Instructor Information**

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### **Course Description**

Ethics is the philosophical study of morality. We study ethics to ask fundamental questions about the good life. By studying ethics we engage human values, rules and justifications. Ethics and morality are intimately connected; however, a distinction exists between the two. Whereas morality concerns itself with rules of conduct, ethics focuses on why certain actions are judged to be right, while others are wrong.

This course is an introductory course in ethics. We will begin by asking the basic question -- what is ethics, and move on to look at the connection between ethics and religion, the history of ethics, and attempt to answer questions about the "good life." The major concepts, theories and approaches to the academic study of ethics will be examined. Our survey will use classic texts from ancient, medieval and modern writers, secular and religious.

The second half of the course will attempt to place theory into practice, as we look at several contemporary ethical/moral issues confronting the world. By design, the course is interdisciplinary, as various themes will enter into our discussion from ethical, philosophical and religious paradigms, as we attempt to compare/contrast traditional views with contemporary issues.

Students will have the opportunity to select either a major ethicist or contemporary ethical issue to research and prepare a final presentation for the class.

### **Requirements**

#### Required Textbooks and Readings

Russ Shafer Landau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). ISBN: 978-0-19-532086-2.

Alasdair MacIntyre, *A Short History of Ethics* (South Bend, IN: University of

Notre Dame Press, 2007). ISBN-13:978-0-268-01759-0.

James Rachels, Stuart Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, Sixth Ed (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2007). ISBN-13:978-0-07-338671-3.

Robert C. Solomon, Clancy W. Martin, *Morality and the Good Life*, Fourth Ed. (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2004). ISBN:0-07-283192-8.

## Recommended Readings

Steven M. Cahn, Peter Markie, *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006). ISBN: 0195178408.

See Appendix for Additional Readings

## Computer Requirements

Shorter articles and relevant documents will be uploaded to Canvas for discussion board.

You will need to have access to a computer and internet with an up-to-date browser and operating system. You will also need software to read course documents in PDF form. If you do not have Adobe Acrobat Reader software on your computer, you can download it by going to the [Adobe Reader download website](#). If you do not have access to a computer and the internet during the spring, there are computer labs at most public libraries with internet access that you can use for free.

Here are the Canvas requirements:

### Operating Systems

- Windows XP SP3 and newer
- Mac OSX 10.6 and newer
- Linux - chromeOS

### Mobile Operating System Native App Support

- iOS 7 and newer
- Android 2.3 and newer

### Computer Speed and Processor

- Use a computer 5 years old or newer when possible
- 1GB of RAM
- 2GHz processor

### Internet Speed

- Along with compatibility and web standards, Canvas has been carefully crafted to accommodate low bandwidth environments.
- Minimum of 512kbps

## Technical skills

As an online student your "classroom" experience will be very different than a traditional student. As part of your online experience, you can expect to utilize a variety of technologies, such as:

1. Communicate via email including sending attachments
2. Navigate the World Wide Web using a Web browser
3. Use office applications such as Microsoft Office or Google Docs to create documents
4. learn how to communicate using a discussion board and upload assignments to a classroom Web site
5. Upload and download saved files
6. Have easy access to the Internet
7. Navigate Canvas, including using the email component within Canvas.

## Course Details and Expectations

This course is conducted entirely online, which means students do not have to be on campus to complete any portion of it. Students will participate in the course using Georgetown University's online learning management system called Canvas. Each Unit/Module will be released on a weekly basis every Sunday at 12am (ET).

### Course-level Learning Objectives

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

- Recall the history, language and concepts of moral philosophy
- Define the major ethical theorists and their systematic schools
- Discuss various tools for expressing tolerance for other people's moral viewpoints – even if they disagree
- How to contribute to on-going moral debate & discussion
- Apply teleological and deontological theories
- Reason well in ethics by identifying/citing the various structures of ethical arguments
- Identify what course of conduct would promote the greatest amount of happiness in the world
- Identify the difference between what is good and what is right
- Identify moral value by the intention of the agent and the principle of a person's action
- Examine the importance of reason and the unqualified rational nature of moral principles in Kant

- Trace social living under state rule and moral life under in a civilized society
- Articulate the connection/relationship between moral values and religious beliefs
- Explain why modern moral philosophers may have failed

### Course Activities and Assignments

You are expected to do the readings that are part of each class session, to watch the lecture videos, and to otherwise engage the material presented on the class website.

Your responsibilities include writing ten 300 word essays and taking six knowledge checks as specified on the calendar. Essays will be submitted via Canvas assignments to the professor, and the professor will return the essays to the students electronically with feedback. All essays must be typed, double-spaced, conform to standard MLA conventions of structure and source citation, and observe all of the niceties of style, grammar, etc. The Lauinger Library website includes a page with [citation guidelines and formats](#).

You are also expected to make five discussion board posts as well as reply to at least two discussion posts per week. This will count towards your participation grade.

You will complete 6 knowledge checks over the semester.

Participation is essential to your success in this class. In distance education courses you are required to participate just as if you were in a face-to-face course. This means that in order to get full credit for participation, you will have to complete your discussion assignments, lesson assignments and quizzes on a timely basis.

Required readings for each class are listed below in the Course Content Outline. All others are highly recommended, and may be referred to in class. Video lectures, shorter articles and important documents will be uploaded to Canvas. Additional websites will be announced, and official documents will be made available in class.

### Final Presentations

Students will have an opportunity to select from a list of contemporary ethicist (Wittgenstein, Hick, Moore, Spencer et al.), or a contemporary ethical issue, for their audio presentation. You will create a 10 minute audio presentation using the Canvas audio recording application or another software of your choice. Since only one presentation may be given for each ethicist/issue, students must obtain approval from the instructor for their selection.

## Communication Strategies

### Communication With Instructor

Your instructor(s) will be available during weekly virtual office hours via the Conferences link on the left-hand side of course navigation links. Your instructor(s) will also check conversations and monitor the discussion board regularly. If you have a private question or concern, feel free to send an email. In general, you can expect a response within two days.

### Communication With Peers

You will be expected to communicate with your peers via the discussion board.

### Announcements

Announcements will be posted in Canvas on a regular basis. They will appear on your Canvas dashboard when you log in and/or will be sent to you directly through your preferred method of notification. Please make certain to check them regularly, as they will contain any important information about upcoming projects or class concerns.

### Email

In this course we will use Canvas to send email for private messages. You can either check your messages in the Canvas system or set your notifications to your preferred method of contact. Please check your messages at least once per day. When submitting messages, please do the following:

- Put a subject in the subject box that describes the email content with your name and module
- Do not send messages asking general information about the class, please post those in the discussion forum

### Questions

In online courses everyone will likely have many questions about things that relate to the course, such as clarification about assignments, course materials, or assessments. Please post these in the QUESTION FORUM which you can access by clicking the DISCUSSIONS button in the course navigation links. This is an open forum, and you are encouraged to give answers and help each other.

### Discussion Forums

Discussion Forums are a way for you to engage with each other about the course content. Five modules will have a question that links to a forum. You can also access each forum by clicking on the DISCUSSIONS button in the course navigation links. In order to get full credit for each discussion, you will need to

post a thoughtful, well-written response to the question and respond to two of your classmates' answers.

### Virtual Office Hours

Once a week I will be available for virtual office hours.

### Turnaround / Feedback

During the module (Monday-Sunday) I will monitor the discussion board several times a day. If you have a concern and send me a message, you can expect a response within two days.

### Netiquette Guidelines

To promote the highest degree of education possible, we ask each student to respect the opinions and thoughts of other students and be courteous in the way that you choose to express yourself. The topics in this course are often controversial and promote debate. Students should be respectful and considerate of all opinions.

In order for us to have meaningful discussions, we must learn to genuinely try to understand what others are saying and be open-minded about others' opinions. If you want to persuade someone to see things differently, it is much more effective to do so in a polite, non-threatening way rather than to do so antagonistically. Everyone has insights to offer based on his/her experiences, and we can all learn from each other. Civility is essential.

## Grading Policy

### Grade Breakdown:

Final grades will be based on the following:

- 18%: Class Participation (discussion board posts)
- 50%: Writing assignments (10 essays X 5 points)
- 20%: Final Presentation
- 12%: Knowledge Checks

### Grade Table:

- A 94 +
- A- 90-93.9
- B+ 87-89.9
- B 84-86.9
- B- 80-83.9
- C+ 77-79.9
- C 74-76.9
- C- 70-73.9
- D+ 67-69.9
- D 64-66.9

D- 61-63.9  
F Below 61

### Assignment Submission & Homework and Make-up Policy

No credit will be given for any assignment that is submitted late without the prior approval of the instructor. Prior Approval means the student has communicated with the instructor before the assignment deadline. An assignment that is submitted late with the instructor's approval will have its grade reduced.

Work is due by the due dates set in Canvas.

Penalties may be applied for late work.

### Absences

The instructor will count a student as "absent" in any week in which the student fails to submit any of the assignments due that week, including discussion postings, knowledge checks, and/or writing assignments.

After the student accumulates two such "absent" weeks, the student will receive a failing grade in this course, regardless of grades earned in any other assignment.

## Academic Integrity

As signatories to the Georgetown University Honor Pledge, you are required to uphold academic honesty in all aspects of the course, especially on exams and papers. The professor is aware of and regularly consults all of the major internet sources for plagiarized papers. Thus, you are hereby cautioned to follow the letter and the spirit of the Standards of Conduct outlined in the Georgetown Honor System brochure pp. 3-4, 11-13. If you have any questions about conforming to rules regarding plagiarism or about the proper format for citations, consult a professor or teaching assistant. The first instance of plagiarism will result in a grade of "F" on that assignment. Any further instance of plagiarism will result in an "F" for the course.

## Accommodation

Students with Disabilities Policies:

The School of Continuing Studies proudly supports the role of Georgetown's Office of Institutional Diversity, Equity, and Affirmative Action and does not discriminate or deny access to otherwise qualified students on the basis of disability. Depending on their documentation, students with disabilities may be eligible for reasonable accommodations and/or special services in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Students with disabilities are strongly encouraged to contact the Academic Resource Center (Leavey Center, Suite 335; 202-687-8354; [arc@georgetown.edu](mailto:arc@georgetown.edu); <http://ldss.georgetown.edu/index.cfm>) before the start of classes to allow that office time to review their documentation and to make recommendations for appropriate accommodations, including note takers, books on tape, extended time on tests, interpreting services and enlarged texts, among others. There is a procedure for requesting an accommodation as well as a list of possible accommodations available.

If the Academic Resource Center recommends accommodations, its office will provide the student with an official letter to share with professors. Students are personally responsible for completing this process officially and in a timely manner. Neither accommodations nor exceptions to policies can be permitted to students who have not completed this process in advance. In some instances, recommended accommodations might not be allowable by a professor if doing so would modify course or degree requirements considered an essential requirement of the program of instruction. Should questions or related issues arise, the student and professor should work directly with the Academic Resource Center to find an appropriate resolution.

## **Technical Support**

Canvas

For support please check out the [Canvas Student Guide](#) page.

Google Apps

Use of [Georgetown University-issued accounts](#) for Google Mail, Calendar, Groups, Talk, Docs, Sites, Video, and Contacts is governed by the contract between Georgetown University and Google.

If you need technical assistance at any time during the course you can visit [Google Drive Help Center](#).

## **Student Support Services**

Services & Resources for Online Students @ the School of Continuing Studies

<http://guides.library.georgetown.edu/scs/online>

Students enrolled in online SCS coursework have access to the University Library System's eResources, including 500+ research databases, 1.5+ million ebooks, and thousands of periodicals and other multimedia files (films, webinars, music, and images) . Students can access these resources through the [Library's Homepage](#) by using their University username (NetID) and password (this is the same login information used to access email, BlackBoard, etc.). The Library does not mail physical items to students.



SCS students may make an appointment with a librarian to discuss a research topic, develop a search strategy, or examine resources for projects and papers. Librarians offer an overview of and in-depth assistance with important resources for senior or master's theses, dissertations, papers and other types of research. Appointments are conducted using Google Hangout (video-conferencing function) through the Georgetown Gmail System or by telephone. This service is available to currently enrolled students who need assistance with Georgetown-assigned projects and papers. Please review the [Services & Resources Guide for Online Students](#) for additional information.

## Course Content Outline

*Subject to change.*

MODULE	TASK	DUE DATE
MODULE 1 May 22-28  History, language and concepts of Moral Philosophy  <b>Topic:</b> Pre & Philosophical History of Moral Philosophy and the "Good" (McIntyre)	<b>Read</b> in McIntyre, 1-13; Rachels, 1-13; Landau 27-37  <b>Watch lecture video:</b> Ethical Theories	-
	<b>Complete Knowledge Check</b>	Sun May 28 11:59 pm
MODULE 2 May 30-June 4  Major Ethicists and Theories, Concepts and Approaches  <b>Topic:</b> Divine Command Theory, Ethics of Conscience, Ethics of Egoism, Ethics of Duty, Ethics of Respect, Ethics of Rights,	<b>Read</b> Solomon & Martin, 1-67  <b>Watch lecture video:</b> What is the Good Life?	-

Utilitarianism, Ethics of Justice, Virtue Ethics	<b>Complete Knowledge Check</b>	Sun, June 4 at 11:59 PM
MODULE 3 June 5-11  The Challenge of Cultural Relativism  <b>Topic:</b> Review Theories of Cultural Relativism	<b>Read</b> Rachels 14-31; MacIntyre, 14-25.  <b>Watch lecture video:</b> Cultural Relativism in Ethics  <b>Post</b> Discussion Board response  <b>Reply</b> to other students' responses in the Discussion Board  <b>Complete writing assignment:</b> 300 word essay	-   Thurs, June 8 by 11:59 PM  Sun, June 11 by 11:59 PM  June 11
MODULE 4 June 12-18  Subjectivism in Ethics; Divine Command Theory; Theory of Natural Law  <b>Topic:</b> How to Apply Ethics/Moral Theories to Contemporary Issues	<b>Read</b> Plato's Euthyphro, selections posted on Canvas; MacIntyre, 110-120; Rachels 32-47 and 48-61.  <b>Watch Video:</b> Subjectivism in Ethics	-

	<p><b>Complete</b> writing assignment: 300 word essay</p> <p><b>Complete</b> Knowledge Check</p>	<p>Sun, June 18 by 11:59 PM June 18</p>
<p>MODULE 5 June 19-25</p> <p>Equality, Justice and Virtue</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Ethical Egoism</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> in Rachels, 62-79; McIntyre, 33-50; Plato's Crito in Solomon-Martin, 68-80</p> <p><b>Watch Video:</b> Ethical Egoism</p>	-
	<p><b>Post</b> Discussion Board response</p>	<p>Thurs, June 22 by 11:59 PM</p>
	<p><b>Reply</b> to other students' responses in the Discussion Board</p>	<p>Sun, June 25 by 11:59 PM</p>
	<p><b>Complete</b> writing assignment: 300 word essay</p>	<p>June 25</p>
<p>MODULE 6 June 26-July 2</p> <p>A Revolution in Ethics</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Utilitarianism</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> in Rachels, 97-123; John Stuart Mill in Solomon &amp; Martin, 326-360; John Rawls, "Classic Utilitarianism"; Cahn, 556-567.</p> <p><b>Watch lecture video:</b> Utilitarianism</p>	-
	<p><b>Complete</b> writing assignment: 300 word essay</p> <p><b>Complete</b> Knowledge Check</p>	<p>Sun, July 2 by 11:59 PM July 2</p>
<p>MODULE 7 July 3-9</p> <p>What is the Good Life?</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> The Ethics of Virtue</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> in Solomon-Martin 106-122; Landau, 21- 41 (Second Edition, 2012); 18-37 (First Edition, 2010); Thomas Aquinas' Summa</p> <p><b>Watch lecture video:</b> Immanuel Kant</p>	-
	<p><b>Post</b> Discussion Board response (Audio post)</p>	<p>Thurs, July 6 by 11:59 PM</p>

	<p><b>Reply</b> to other students' responses in the Discussion Board</p> <p><b>Complete</b> writing assignment: 300 word essay</p> <p><b>Submit</b> topic proposal for FINAL PROJECT</p>	<p>Sun, July 9 by 11:59 PM</p> <p>July 9</p> <p>July 9</p>
<p>MODULE 8 July 10-16</p> <p>Respect for the Human Person as an Individual</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Normative Ethics I; Rational Absolutism</p> <p>Moral Rules are Absolute</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Normative Ethics II, Rational Absolutism</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> Rachels, 127-135; 136-145; 158-172 MacIntyre, 190-198; 57-83; Landau, 252-271 (Second Edition, 2012); 240-258 (First Edition, 2010); Kant's Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals in Solomon-Martin, 259-281</p> <p><b>Watch lecture video:</b> The Ethics of Virtue</p> <p><b>Read:</b> in Solomon &amp; Martin, 281-291; Landau, 160-167</p> <p><b>Watch lecture video:</b> Normative Ethics</p>	-
	<p><b>Post</b> Discussion Board response</p>	<p>Thurs, July 13 by 11:59 PM</p>
	<p><b>Complete</b> Knowledge Check</p> <p><b>Reply</b> to other students' responses in the Discussion Board</p> <p><b>Complete</b> writing assignment: 300 word essay</p>	<p>Sun, July 16 by 11:59 PM</p> <p>July 16</p> <p>July 16</p>
<p>MODULE 9 July 17-23</p> <p>Living in a Civil Society</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> The Social Contract</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> in Rachels, 80-96; Leviathan in Solomon &amp; Martin, 188-199; An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals, 227-231; The "Social Contract"</p> <p><b>Watch lecture video:</b> The Social Contract</p>	-
	<p><b>Complete</b> Knowledge Check</p> <p><b>Complete</b> writing assignment: 300 word essay</p>	<p>Sun, July 23 by 11:59 PM</p> <p>July 23</p>

	<b>Submit</b> outline of final project	
<p>MODULE 10 July 24-30</p> <p>The Confluence of Religion and Moral Philosophy</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Natural Law</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> on Augustine in Solomon-Martin, 148-175; Solomon &amp; Martin, 148-185; A Treatise on Human Nature in Solomon &amp; Martin, 214-220</p> <p><b>Watch lecture video:</b> Empirical and a Priori Ethics</p>	-
	<b>Post</b> Discussion Board responses	Thurs, July 27 by 11:59 PM
	<b>Reply</b> to other students' responses in the Discussion Board	Sun, July 30 by 11:59 PM
	<b>Complete</b> writing assignment: 300 word essay	July 30
<p>MODULE 11 July 30-Aug 6</p> <p>The Influence of Classic Philosophical Literature</p> <p><b>Topic:</b> Modern Ethics Theories</p>	<p><b>Read:</b> in Nietzsche's Beyond Good &amp; Evil in Solomon &amp; Martin, 380-399; Genealogy of Morals, Ibid., 399-404; Sartre, Existentialism is a Humanism in Solomon &amp; Martin (excerpts), 437-445; MacIntyre, 249-269.</p> <p><b>Watch lecture video:</b> Friedrich Nietzsche</p>	
	<b>Complete</b> writing assignment: 300 word essay	Sun, Aug 6 by 11:59 PM
<p>MODULE 12 Aug 7-14</p>	<b>Work</b> on final project - 10 min final presentation	Audio Final Pres Due Mon, Aug 21 by 11:59 PM

## Appendix A: Reading List

An updated list of current readings and topical links will be provided in Canvas.

## Appendix B: Additional Reading

The following titles are highly recommended for further reading in the field of ethics and moral philosophy. Although not required for the course, some of the ideas presented by these authors may be discussed in class.

Ernest Albee, *A History of English Utilitarianism* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

Susan K. Allard-Nelson, *An Aristotelian Approach to Ethical Theory – The Norms of Virtue* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellon Press, 2004).

Saint Thomas Aquinas, *Treatise on the Virtues*. John A. Oesterle, Trans. (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984).

Maria Baghramian, *Relativism* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

Simon Blackburn, *Being Good: An Introduction to Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Richard Brandt, *Ethical Theory: The Problem of Normative and Critical Ethics* (Temecula, CA: Textbook Publishers, 2003).

Claudia Card, Ed., *Feminist Ethics* (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas Press, 1991).

Troels Engberg-Pederson, *Aristotle's Theory of Moral Insight* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

Paul Guyer, *The Cambridge Companion to Kant* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Knud Haakonssen, *Natural Law and Moral Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

W.F.R. Hardie, *Aristotle's Ethical Theory* (Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1968).

Clyde Kluckhohn, "Ethical Relativity: Sic et Non," *Journal of Philosophy* 52b(1955): 663-666.

Carlos Santiago Nino, *The Ethics of Human Rights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

Martha Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

Robert William Shaver, *Rational Egoism* (New York: Cambridge University Press,

1998).

Eleanor Stump, *Aquinas* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

Christine Swanton, *Virtue Ethics: A Pluralistic View* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).



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