

Philosophy 010: Introduction to Ethics

Summer 2017, Session II
MTWR – 5:30PM-7:30PM

Instructor: Jason Farr
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Office Hours: TBA

Course Description and Aims:

In this course we will investigate questions concerning morality. The primary skill we will practice is philosophical reflection, by which we will systematically interrogate our beliefs about what is right and wrong, good and bad, what is meaningful, valuable, oppressive, or harmful. We will do this, as Aristotle says, not merely for some theoretical understanding of morality, "but in order to become good people, since otherwise there would be nothing of benefit in [our investigation]." Our course will thus be structured around contemporary moral issues each Georgetown student needs to consider in their everyday life. Some topics will include: happiness and the good life, structural injustices, immigration, obligations to those in need, and treatment of non-human animals and the environment.

Along the way, there are several additional aims of the course. First, students will learn traditional philosophical approaches to Western ethics that continue to hold relevance to moral thinking today. Second, students will practice reading and writing philosophical texts. This will include learning to comprehend philosophical material while charitably reconstructing philosophers' arguments, and learning to craft careful, well-constructed arguments of their own. Third, students will practice respectful and detailed discussion of important moral issues.

Required Texts: *All other readings on Canvas*

Moral Philosophy: A Reader, 4th edition, edited by Louis P. Pojman and Peter Tramel (Hackett 2009).

Course Requirements and Policies:

Readings: Philosophical readings are difficult, and much of class will be dedicated to understanding the assigned readings. The instructor will use the latter part of each class period to set up the students to be able to complete the next assigned readings, and the students will be expected to have read thoroughly (though certainly not completely understood) the readings assigned for each class.

Three papers will be assigned throughout the course. Each paper will be based on the student's choice among prompts assigned by the instructor. The first two papers will be roughly 1,000

words, while the third will be roughly 1,500 words. Each student will get detailed feedback on the first two papers that will prepare them for the following papers.

In-class assignments (roughly 10 throughout the course) will be assigned randomly throughout the course. They will be short and relatively easy, most often having to do with practicing philosophical writing. The two lowest grades will be dropped.

Attendance

Since summer courses are condensed, you may miss two class periods without a valid excuse. Beyond this you will need doctor's notes, etc. Excessive absences will lower participation grades.

Extensions and Late Papers

Extensions will be granted only if the student emails the instructor more than 24 hours in advance of the deadline. Late papers will incur grade reductions based of about a third of a letter grade per day past the deadline.

Participation is extremely important, especially in a smaller summer course. Each student will be expected to participate in discussions each class. That said, how much a student speaks in class will not correlate perfectly with participation grade. Students are graded on genuine and serious engagement with the material, as well as exhibiting respect and courtesy in discussions both with peers and with the instructor.

Drafts are encouraged though not required to be submitted to the instructor no later than three days before the deadline. The instructor will give three pointed constructive comments on how to improve the paper.

Grade Breakdown

1st Paper: 15%: **Due July 24th**
2nd Paper: 25%: **Due August 3rd**
3rd Paper: 30%: **Due August 14th**
In-class assignments: 15%
Participation: 15%

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course. We will discuss these issues in class, but please acquaint yourself with Georgetown policies [here](#) and [here](#).

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Students with a multitude of different disabilities and learning styles will absolutely be given accommodation when and where possible. Students need to inform the instructor at the beginning of the course so accommodations can be made.

Course Readings and Schedule.

Names in italics mark readings in the required book. All other readings will be on Canvas.

The instructor reserves the right to change readings (with sufficient notification to students) throughout the term.

July 10	<i>Week 1</i>	Philosophy, Disagreement, Ethics, Arguments	<i>Introductory – No Assigned Reading</i>
July 11		Where Does Value Come From?	Street, “A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value”
July 12		Relativism vs. Objectivism	<i>Benedict</i> , Chp. 4, p.33-38 <i>Pojman</i> , Chp. 5, p.38-53 <i>Harman</i> , Chp. 6, p. 53-60
July 13		Utilitarianism	<i>Mill</i> , Chp 19, p.158-164 Smart, “Outline of a System of Utilitarian Ethics,” Sections 1-6, p. 1-41
July 17	<i>Week 2</i>	Utilitarianism – Criticisms & Alternatives	<i>Nozick</i> , Chp. 16, p.141-143 <i>Williams</i> , Chp. 21, p. 175-186 Leguin, “Omelas” <i>Hooker</i> , Chp. 23, p. 200-213
July 18		Poverty: Consistency + Utilitarianism vs. Deontology	Singer, “The Life You Can Save” Pogge, “World Poverty and Human Rights” Risse, “Do We Owe the Poor...” Pogge, “Baselines for Determining Harm”
July 19		Aristotle – Eudaimonia, Function, Virtue	<i>Aristotle</i> , Chp. 29, p.301-30
July 20		Aristotle – Natural Virtues	Foot, <i>Natural Goodness</i> Chps. 2-3
July 24	<i>Week 3</i>	Kant: Formal Constraints *First Paper Due*	<i>Kant</i> p.218-238, Rawls, <i>TJ</i> sections 3-4.
July 25		Kant/Korsgaard: Self-Legislation	Korsgaard, “The Authority of Reflection”
July 26		Identities: Race	Mills, “But What are You Really?” Outlaw, “Toward a Critical Theory of Race”
July 27		Identities: Sex and Gender	Haslanger, “Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them to Be?” Fausto-Sterling, “How to Build a Man” Bettcher, “Evil Deceivers and Make Believers”
July 31	<i>Week 4</i>	Agnology, Standpoint Theory: Knowing Morally Relevant Facts	Harding, “Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology” Spelman, “Managing Ignorance”
August 1		Non-Human Animals: Suffering, Rights	Pollan, “An Animal’s Place” Singer, “The Ethics of Eating Meat” Engel, “The Commonsense Case for Ethical Vegetarianism” Carruthers, “Against the Moral Standing of Animals”
August 2		Non-Human Animals: Morality of Sustainability	<i>Kant</i> (see above) <i>Cowspiracy</i> (Documentary) Jamieson, “Animal Liberation is an Environmental Ethic”

August 3	Climate Change: <i>Small Harms in Big Systems</i> *Second Paper Due*	Gardiner, "Ethics and Global Climate Change" Jamieson, "When Utilitarians should be Virtue Theorists"
August 7 <i>Week 5</i>	Immigration: <i>Rights to move? Right to Keep People Out?</i>	Walzer, "Membership," p.31-51 Carens, "Aliens and Citizens, the Case for Open Borders"
August 8	Protest	Boxill, "Self-respect and Protest" Chomsky, "On Resistance" MLK, "Letter from Birmingham Jail"
August 9	Norms of Discourse: <i>How ought we engage in moral arguments?</i>	Fricker, "Epistemic Injustice" Dotson, "Tracking Epistemic Violence"
August 10	Last Class: Becoming Moral	Hare, "The Archangel and the Prole" TBD
August 14th	*Final Paper Due*	