

## PHIL 10: INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

Georgetown University ♦ Summer 2018 ♦ M-F 1-3pm

**INSTRUCTOR:** Molly Wilder ♦ **EMAIL:** mbw40@georgetown.edu

**OFFICE HOURS:** See Scheduling on Canvas for times and locations

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to the philosophical study of ethics. Questions addressed include: What is the nature of virtue and vice? How do we assess ethical character? How do we determine what is right and wrong? What features matter to the ethical assessment of actions? What duties do we have towards others and ourselves? How did our contemporary conception of ethics come to be? How might we expect this conception to change in the future? Readings will be drawn from both ancient and contemporary sources.

### COURSE GOALS

1. Become comfortable discussing a variety of philosophical theories, concepts, and arguments relevant to the philosophical study of ethics.
2. Empathize with and understand perspectives that you may not share.
3. Develop the ability to read thoughtfully and write effectively in response to difficult philosophical texts.
4. Develop your own positions and arguments on the philosophical subject of ethics.
5. Apply your understanding of philosophy and ethics to your analysis of current events, what you are learning in other classes, and how you make decisions in your everyday life.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

All required reading materials will be made available on Canvas.

### ASSIGNMENTS AND GRADING BREAKDOWN

10% Reading Quizzes/Attendance

10% Discussion Briefs

20% Short Paper Final Draft

10% Long Paper Second Draft

50% Long Paper Final Draft

### READING QUIZZES

Studies on learning show that quizzes are one of the best tools available to help students retain information and solidify learning. This phenomenon is called the testing effect or the retrieval-practice effect. Quizzes are also particularly valuable in a discussion-based class, as they jumpstart your thoughts at the beginning of class so as to be better ready to discuss them. As the most effective use of retrieval practice involves repeated recall efforts spaced out over time, quizzes in this class will cover not only the reading material due on the day of the quiz, but may also ask questions that refer back to earlier readings.

**Starting the second day of class (5/22), there will be a reading quiz every day of class, including days when there is no new reading.** Each reading quiz will consist of 2 questions and you will be given 5 minutes to answer them. The questions will address major points that are emphasized in the readings. If you have done the reading carefully, they should be easy to answer. Answers should be short—sometimes a phrase will be enough, and answers never need be more than 3 sentences long.

## DRAFT SYLLABUS AS OF 3/18/18 – SUBJECT TO REVISION

### READING QUIZZES RUBRIC

10 points: Satisfactory work. Demonstrates good understanding of reading.

5 points: Acceptable work. Demonstrates partial understanding of reading.

0 points: Unacceptable work. Assignment is not turned in on time or fails to demonstrate understanding of reading.

### ATTENDANCE

Quizzes will be given first thing at the beginning of class, and they will serve as your attendance record for the day. If you miss class or are so late that you are not able to take the quiz, you will lose your 10 points for that day. However, **your 2 lowest quiz scores will automatically dropped, which means you may miss 2 quizzes for any reason without penalty. If you miss or expect to miss more than 2 quizzes for good reason (prolonged sickness, family emergency, athletic commitments, etc.) please consult with me immediately.** I will address such situations on a case-by-case basis, though I will typically only grant exceptions in consultation with your dean. Note, however, that attendance and participation in class discussion are crucial to the goals of this course, and that except in extreme circumstances, **if you miss 10 or more classes, you will automatically fail the course.**

### READING BRIEFS

For each class reading assignment, you are required to complete a reading brief, which is intended to prepare you for class discussion. Reading briefs must be 200-300 words (1-2 pages double spaced) and will respond to questions I will provide you. Reading briefs will ask for your general comprehension of a piece; I will not be asking for highly specific detail. They will then ask you to engage with the text in some way, to say whether you agree or disagree, to connect the material to your own life, prepare discussion questions, etc. **Reading briefs are due at 11am on Canvas the day on which we will be discussing the relevant material.** Late reading briefs may earn up to half credit. Briefs turned in over a week late will earn no credit.

### READING BRIEFS RUBRIC

10 points: Satisfactory work. Demonstrates strong preparation to contribute to class discussion.

5 points: Acceptable work. Demonstrates acceptable preparation to contribute to class discussion.

0 points: Unacceptable work. Assignment is not turned in on time or fails to demonstrate preparation to contribute to class discussion.

### PARTICIPATION IN CLASS

The quality of your participation in class can affect your overall grade. Excellent participation can raise your overall grade by a step, so B to B+, etc, and poor participation will lower your overall grade by a step. If your participation is satisfactory, neither poor nor excellent, your grade will be unaffected. Excellent participation includes being prepared with paper or electronic copies of the day's reading and your discussion briefs in class, raising particularly insightful points or questions, raising points or questions that improve the quality of class discussion, and helping to create a welcoming atmosphere for other students. This is a class designed to teach argumentation and a diversity of views; thus, raising a new argument that counters or modifies a position currently under discussion is typically an excellent way to contribute. Poor participation includes regularly not having materials required for class, using your computer for non-class related activities during class, never or rarely participating, speaking in a way that is

## DRAFT SYLLABUS AS OF 3/18/18 – SUBJECT TO REVISION

disrespectful to others, failure to engage in discussion with peers, or monopolizing class time to the detriment of classmates. About half way through the semester, I will provide a preliminary participation grade so that students have a sense of how they are doing.

This class is a discussion-based class. If you are the type of student who greatly dislikes speaking in class, for whatever reason, this may not be the best class for you. However, if you strongly wish to take the course, for scheduling or other reasons, I am willing to consider alternative methods of demonstrating participation skills. Please e-mail me to request this sort of accommodation.

### PAPERS

Short Paper First Draft (500-800 words): This paper will focus on the explanation and interpretation of a brief excerpt from a text. I will provide you several prompts to choose from. We will have an in-class peer review writing workshop to help you revise your papers. Your draft must be at least 500 words, and you must bring two printed out double-spaced copies to class with you for your peers to comment on. I will not be commenting on this draft, but I will check your draft for completion and major problems. If you do not complete the draft and bring two copies to class, it will reduce your Short Paper Final Draft grade by a step (A- to B+, B+ to B, etc.). No extensions will be granted for this draft.

**Due in class and on Canvas: Friday, May 25<sup>th</sup> at 1pm**

Short Paper Final Draft (600-800 words): After you revise based on peer comments, you will turn in your final draft on Canvas. This draft counts for 20% of your overall grade. Extensions are possible for this draft, but may delay how soon you receive my comments.

**Due on Canvas: Tuesday, May 29<sup>th</sup> at 9am**

Long Paper First Draft (1000-1500 words): This paper will focus on argumentation. I will provide prompts for this paper, but you will also have the possibility of developing your own topic. All students will be required to meet with me to discuss their paper topics. If you do not come to a topic meeting with a topic to discuss, it will reduce your Second Draft grade by a step (A- to B+, B+ to B, etc.) As with your short paper, we will have an in-class peer review writing workshop. Your draft must be at least 1000 words, and you must bring two printed out double-spaced copies to class. I will check your draft for completion and major problems, but will not provide comments. If you do not complete the draft and bring two copies to class, it will reduce your Long Paper Second Draft grade by a step. No extensions will be granted for this draft.

**Due in class and on Canvas: Tuesday, June 5<sup>th</sup> at 1pm**

Long Paper Second Draft (1000-1500 words): You will have the opportunity to revise your paper based on your peers' comments. This draft I will grade and provide comments on. It counts for 10% of your overall grade. Extensions are possible for this draft, but may delay how soon you receive my comments.

**Due on Canvas: Friday, June 9<sup>th</sup> at 9am**

Long Paper Final Draft (1000-1500 words): You will have the opportunity to revise your paper based on my comments, which I will return to you by Tuesday, June 12<sup>th</sup>. This draft counts for 50% of your overall grade. No extensions will be granted for this draft.

**Due on Canvas: Monday, June 18<sup>th</sup> at 9am**

### DRAFTS

## DRAFT SYLLABUS AS OF 3/18/18 – SUBJECT TO REVISION

Except for the graded Second Draft listed above, **I will not read paper drafts**; however, I will look at a few sentences or a short paragraph if you are concerned about a specific writing issue. You may also present your paper orally and we can talk through your ideas that way.

### PAPER EXTENSIONS

If you plan in advance, you may have an automatic extension of up to three days (72 hours) for any reason on the Short Paper Final Draft or the Long Paper Second Draft. Since your classmates will be depending on you to bring a draft to class, no extension is possible for the Short Paper and Long Paper First Drafts. Generally, I cannot provide extensions on the Long Paper Final Draft, because of when I must submit your final grades, though an extension may be possible in unusual circumstances. Otherwise there is no limit on the number of extensions you may request. Note that asking for an extension may delay how quickly I return your paper with comments.

**If you want an extension for the Short Paper Final Draft or the Long Paper Final Draft, you must request the extension from me by email at least two days (48 hours) in advance of the deadline. Since the extension is automatic only if requested sufficiently in advance, the extension is not officially granted until I confirm your request in a reply email.** Less than two days before the deadline, I will only consider giving extensions for serious emergencies, and typically will only do so in consultation with your dean. Likewise, I will also only give extensions longer than three days in unusual circumstances, and typically only in consultation with your dean.

### PAPERS RUBRIC

Note that this rubric is different from the schema used by Georgetown to calculate your GPA. This rubric is for use in this class only. Your final grade will be a letter grade that will then be translated into quality points using Georgetown's schema. Consult the Writing Guidelines for Interpretive and Argumentative Papers on Canvas for more detail on how your writing will be graded.

A (100 points): Truly outstanding in form and content. Shows a deep and insightful understanding of the material. Few or no mistakes. Exemplifies an unusually high standard of work. Although there is no rule or curve, because of the amount of effort involved, this grade is rarely earned.

A- (95 points): Excellent in form and content. Shows a deep understanding of the material. Several minor mistakes. Reserved for a very high standard of work.

B+ (90 points): Very good work. Shows a strong understanding of the material. Many minor mistakes or at least one significant issue in form or content. Meets and exceeds the basic expectations for this assignment.

B (85 points): Good work. Shows a good understanding of the material. A few significant issues in form or content. Squarely meets the basic expectations for this assignment.

B- (80 points): Satisfactory work. Shows a good understanding of the material. Several significant issues in form or content. Meets the basic expectations for the assignment.

C+ (75 points): Acceptable work. Shows an adequate understanding of the material. The writing shows promise, but has many significant issues and at least one serious issue in form or content. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss the work.

C (70 points): Adequate work. Shows an adequate understanding of the material. The writing shows promise, but has several serious issues in form or content. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss the work.

## DRAFT SYLLABUS AS OF 3/18/18 – SUBJECT TO REVISION

C- (65 points): Marginal work. Shows some understanding of the material. The writing shows promise, but has many serious issues in form or content. Students are encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss the work.

D (60 points): Minimally passing work. Shows some understanding of the material. The student receives credit for the work, but the grade is a red flag. Students are strongly encouraged to meet with the instructor to discuss the work.

F (0 points): Unacceptable work. Assignment either not turned in or is so lacking as to fail to complete the assignment.

### LATE ASSIGNMENTS

For each day (24 hours) that a paper assignment is late, your grade for the assignment will go down by a step. So if a paper receives a grade of a B+ but is one hour late, your grade on that assignment will be bumped down to a B, and if it is 25 hours late, down to a B-. Any paper turned in over seven days late (without an extension) will receive an F.

### APPEALING GRADES

If you believe the work you submitted deserves a different grade than it received, you may ask in writing for reconsideration. Your request must be submitted within one week, but no sooner than two days after the assignment is returned. Your written request must explain why you believe the work deserves a different grade. Most appeals will not result in a change of grade, but if a change is made please note that the grade may be either higher or lower.

### ACADEMIC HONESTY

You have all signed the Georgetown University Honor Pledge and have therefore committed to holding yourselves to the standards of academic life. I expect you to uphold both the letter and spirit of the pledge. The most common form of academic dishonesty is plagiarism. Plagiarism may be committed unintentionally—it is easy to simply forget to cite a source. The only items that do not require citation are your original thoughts or general knowledge. To avoid accidental plagiarism, it helps to follow this rule: if you're not sure whether or not it needs to be cited, cite it. **I am required to report any case of suspected academic dishonesty to the Honor Council, which adjudicates such cases.** More information on Georgetown's Honor System may be found here: <https://honorcouncil.georgetown.edu/system/policies>. **I will check all paper drafts for plagiarism using turnitin.com.**

### EMAIL

Feel free to email me at [mbw40@georgetown.edu](mailto:mbw40@georgetown.edu) if you have any logistical questions, but **please always check first whether the syllabus or other class materials answer your question.** Some great reasons to email me include: a reading is missing from Canvas, a page is missing from a reading, the online submission link for an assignment is missing or not working, you believe there is an error in the syllabus or in an email I've sent, you do not understand or are confused about a particular instruction that I've given, you want to request an extension, you want to alert me that you will not be in class, you want to set up an appointment to talk with me. If in doubt, e-mail me. I promise, the worst I'll do is remind you to look at the syllabus or to make an appointment.

If you have a substantive question about philosophy, you will almost always need to come to office hours or make an appointment. To answer a philosophical question, I will typically need to clarify what exactly you are asking and check in with you whether you understand at each point

## DRAFT SYLLABUS AS OF 3/18/18 – SUBJECT TO REVISION

of the explanation, and this back-and-forth is too burdensome for email. **I will do my best to answer all emails within 48 hours, but for example, if you suddenly have a question about an assignment the night before it is due, it is unlikely that I will be able to respond in time.** If I do not respond within 48 hours, feel free to send me a reminder.

### INSTRUCTIONAL CONTINUITY

If campus closes because of weather or some other reason, I will email you instructions on what to do in place of the class meeting. **In such situations, you are responsible for checking your email in advance of the scheduled start of class.**

### SELECTED CAMPUS RESOURCES

**Academic Resource Center** (<http://academicsupport.georgetown.edu/>): Students seeking tutoring, study tips, or information on what constitutes plagiarism, or students requiring disabilities or sponsored activity accommodations should visit the ARC. All students might benefit from the academic skills workshops offered (schedule available online).

**Writing Center** (<http://writingcenter.georgetown.edu/>): The Writing Center provides one-on-one peer tutoring focused on improving your writing skills (appointment schedule available online). I encourage you to go to the Writing Center at any stage in the writing process, from formulating your ideas to a full draft.

**Counseling and Psychiatric Services** (CAPS: <http://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/mental-health/>): Your mental health is just as real and important as your physical health. And just as in the normal course of things several of you will likely benefit from our medical services this semester, so also several of you will likely benefit from our psychiatric services. There is a wide range of services offered, from group to individual care, including care for those who cannot afford normal counseling services. Please take advantage of these as needed to maintain your optimal health.

**Title IX:** Rape and other forms of sexual misconduct are tragically common in our society. Please note that there are services available for students who have been exploited (<http://studenthealth.georgetown.edu/crisis-counseling/sexualassault-relationship-violence/>). Also, please note that while I am always happy to speak with students, even about topics as difficult as these, I am also required by federal law to report any indication I receive of sexual misconduct to Georgetown's Title IX coordinator, including misconduct that happened in the distant past. If you are looking for confidential guidance I recommend contacting Jen Schweer (Associate Director, Health Education Services, Sexual Assault Response and Prevention) at [jls242@georgetown.edu](mailto:jls242@georgetown.edu) or 202.687.0323.

**Your Dean:** Students tend to forget that the main function of their dean is to ensure the success and wellbeing of university students. Deans are completely informed not only about the resources on campus (of which there are many more of than those listed here) but also the policies and ways in which the university can assist students struggling in any way.

### READING SCHEDULE

#### **Week 1 – Aristotle/Virtue Ethics**

Monday, 5/21

Introductions, syllabus review, discussion of student virtue (no required reading)

Tuesday, 5/22

Selections from Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics

DRAFT SYLLABUS AS OF 3/18/18 – SUBJECT TO REVISION

Wednesday, 5/23

Julia Annas, “Being Virtuous and Doing the Right Thing”

Thursday, 5/24

Neera Badhwar, “The Milgram Experiments, Learned Helplessness, and Character Traits”

Friday, 5/25

Badhwar cont. (no new reading brief due), Peer Writing Workshop - **SHORT PAPER DRAFT 1 DUE IN CLASS**

**Week 2 – Utilitarianism/Consequentialism**

**LONG PAPER TOPIC MEETINGS MUST BE SCHEDULED FOR THIS WEEK**

Monday, 5/28

Selections from John Stuart Mill, Utilitarianism

Tuesday, 5/29 - **SHORT PAPER FINAL DRAFT DUE at 9am on Canvas**

Mill cont. (no new reading brief due)

Wednesday, 5/30

Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”

Thursday, 5/31

Bernard Williams, “Critique of Utilitarianism”

Johnathan Glover, “Solzhenitsyn Principle”

Friday, 6/1

Ursula Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”

Handout on Robert Nozick’s “Experience Machine”

Recommended viewing: The Matrix (1999)

**Week 3 – Kant/Deontology**

Monday, 6/4

Selections from Kant, Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals

Tuesday, 6/5

Kant cont. (no new reading brief due), Peer Writing Workshop Round 1 - **LONG PAPER DRAFT 1 DUE IN CLASS**

Wednesday, 6/6

Onora O’Neil, “Kantian Ethics and World Hunger”

Thursday, 6/7

Susan Wolf, “Moral Saints”

DRAFT SYLLABUS AS OF 3/18/18 – SUBJECT TO REVISION

Friday, 6/8

Michael Stocker, “The Schizophrenia of Modern Ethical Theories” - **LONG PAPER  
SECOND DRAFT DUE at 9am on Canvas**

**Week 4 – Nietzsche and Feminist Ethics**

Monday, 6/11

Selections from Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*

Tuesday, 6/12

Nietzsche cont. (no new reading brief due)

Wednesday, 6/13

Virginia Held, *Feminist Transformations of Moral Theory*

Thursday, 6/14

Held cont. (no new reading brief due)

Friday, 6/15

Final reflection activities

Monday, 6/18

**LONG PAPER FINAL DRAFT DUE at 9am on Canvas**

**\*\*\*ENJOY YOUR SUMMER BREAK!\*\*\***