

## **Intro to Ethics**

### **Philosophy 010-01: Pre-Session Summer 2020**

Instructor: Sara Kolmes, sk1719@georgetown.edu

**Office Hours:** As many of you have internships and busy schedules over the summer, I've found it's impossible to have office hours that work for many students over the summer. Because of this, my office hours during summer courses are by (readily available and happily arranged) appointment. I will also stay after class to answer questions most days.

**Meetings:** 10:45AM-12:45PM Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Reiss 559

**Texts:** all readings and other course documents will be available on Canvas. You will not need to purchase any textbooks. **Please use the versions of the papers I provide for you, because they are heavily excerpted.**

#### **Course Description:**

This course will have four main sections. We will begin by examining certain problems that arise when we try to make moral judgments—problems such as the logic of ethical arguments, cultural relativism (“What’s right for us is not necessarily right for them”), subjectivism, (“What’s right for me is not necessarily right for you”), and the role of religion in morality (e.g., “What’s right is just what God says is right”). Following this, we will consider some philosophical theories of how to systematically think about morality, and their main benefits and criticisms. We will then briefly look at some risks we run in what kind of things we take to be evidence in ethical dilemmas, before finally using our new ethical analysis skills to analyze practical ethical issues such as whether we have an obligation to present our privacy, the moral aspects of political protest, and our relationships to our parents.

#### **Grading:**

**Participation:** The specifics of our participation grading will be debated by students and voted on during the first day of class. No matter what is decided, charity to other students and their arguments will be a significant part of this. Our aim is to learn to debate ethical issues respectfully, and participation grades will reflect your ability to do so.

**Exam:** There will be one fairly short in-class exam, at the end of the first week of class, on the first section of the course. This will consist of some combination of definitions, multiple choice questions, short answer questions (requiring a couple sentences), and longer answer questions (requiring a couple paragraphs).

**Comments:** During Section Two of the course, you will write one comment, focusing on any of the ethical theories we cover. During Section Three, you will have the option to write a second comment to improve your score on your first comment. These comments will be due before class the class-day after the relevant ethical theory or concept, and will be returned with comments. They will serve as mini ethics papers to give you practice for the final paper. Comments will be between 600 and 800 words in length, and will,

1. Describe a legitimate ethical dilemma presented in a piece of media (including a newspaper article, novel, short story, television show, movie, song, comic book, online article, public celebrity drama, etc). This ethical dilemma must be commented on by either the person presenting the dilemma or some other person involved. Ex. a journalist might present an ethical dilemma and argue it was handled badly, or a character in a television show might be placed in an ethical dilemma and respond to it. This section should be long enough for me to understand what's happening, but no longer.
2. Explain how those presenting or reacting to the ethical dilemma are engaging the relevant ethical theory (implicitly or explicitly) or engaging one of the additional considerations.
3. Evaluate whether the response to this dilemma was right or wrong, on the basis of this ethical theory or considerations. The third section of this paper should be the longest.

**Short Paper:** There will be a final paper (1,000-2000 words with 1500 words as a suggested goal) in which you will analyze an ethical dilemma. This will be due the last day of class. Topics and guidelines will be given later in the semester. Late papers will be penalized half a letter grade per day.

These will contribute to your final grade in the following way.

Participation	20%
Comments	30%
Paper	35%
Exam	15%

**Please Note:**

- Late work will be accepted only in the case of a documentable emergency or by prior arrangement. I am very generous with extensions *if they are requested more than 24 hours before the deadline.*

- Laptops and tablets are allowed for purposes of note-taking or other course activities. Any student caught using their laptop or tablet for a non-academic purpose or texting during class time will be asked to leave. All other electronic equipment and all headphones must be silenced and stowed, except by prior request. Recording devices must be discussed with me ahead of time, in order to respect other student's privacy.
- Students are responsible for knowing and following Georgetown policies regarding academic dishonesty and plagiarism. Suspected cases of plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will be rigorously investigated, and penalized as severely as possible. I reserve the right to submit any assignment to any plagiarism detection service of my choosing. Consult [honor.georgetown.edu](http://honor.georgetown.edu) for more information about the honor policies.
- Students with disabilities and religiously observant students who require accommodations should speak with me at the beginning of term. I am extremely open to accommodations beyond those that the University requires, so please come and talk to me about what I can do to best make this learning environment accessible. Bring documentation if you have it, but no documentation is required.

## Course Schedule

Note: This schedule is tentative and subject to revision, depending on our in-class progress throughout the semester. Any changes will be announced in class and posted on Canvas.

Date	Reading Prior to Class	Assignment
<b>Section One:</b>	<b>Ethical Arguments</b>	
5/18	"Evaluating Moral Arguments", Lewis Vaughn 43-55	
5/19	"Evaluating Moral Arguments", Lewis Vaughn, 55-62	
5/20	"Subjectivism, Relativism, and Emotivism", Lewis Vaughn 22-33	
5/21	15 Minute Interview with Catherine Korsgaard on Ethics, posted on Canvas	<b>In-class viewing of Rear Window</b>

	"The Sources of Normativity" Catherine Korsgaard, Lecture 1, Pg 1-8 (stop before 'Voluntarism')	
5/22	No reading assigned: study for the test!	Test 1 given in class
<b>Section Two:</b>	<b>Ethical Theories</b>	
5/25	<i>Mill</i> , Wendy Donner 3-5 (top of page) and 15-23 (top of page)	In-depth discussion of comment assignments in class.
5/26	Excerpts from "Plato on Commensurability and Desire", Martha Nussbaum and "The Repugnant Conclusion", Jonathan Spelman	
5/27	"Virtues and Vices", Philippa Foot "On some Vices of Virtue Ethics", Robert Louden	
5/28	"Sources of Normativity", Lecture 3, Christine Korsgaard (pgs 77-87)  "Duty and Desolation", Rae Langton (Pgs 481-484, 492(start of section II)-498)	
5/29	A break for you all. Catch up if you're behind!	<b>In-class viewing of Alien</b>
<b>Section Three:</b>	<b>Ethical Evidence</b>	
6/1	"Stoic Warriors", Nancy Sherman, 1-15 (through 'A Preview of Themes')	Discussion of how to write a philosophical paper.
6/2	"Moral orientation and moral development", Carol Gilligan	
6/3	"Caring and Evil", Claudia Card	
6/4	"Epistemic Value and What we Care About", Linda Zagzebski (9 [beginning of	Final Paper Topic announced.

	section II] -22)	
<b>Section Four:</b>	<b>Making Ethical Arguments</b>	The following section is more mutable in terms of the topics we cover. We will discuss what we're interested in looking at, and may vote to change what ethical issues we practice on. Any issues that the class seems particularly interested in may be possible additions (with your consent)
6/5	"Crito", Plato	
6/8	"The Science and Business of Genetic Ancestry Testing", Deborah A. Bolnick et al from <i>Beyond Bioethics: Towards A New Biopolitics</i>  "Your Body, Their Property", Osagie K Obasogie from <i>Beyond Bioethics: Towards A New Biopolitics</i>	<b>In-class viewing of portions of "The DNA of a Killer" (2017) from 48 Hours (CBS News)</b>
6/9	"An Ethical Duty to Protect One's Own Information Privacy?", Anita Allen (845-864)	Some time set aside in class for paper direction.
6/10	"Talking About Slurs", Cassie Herbert (1-19 [end of IV])	<i>Note: I will announce this in class as well, but as a part of our discussion of the ethics of using slurs <b>it is not permissible to use these slurs ourselves. Doing so will result in an extremely significant participation point penalty.</b> That we are discussing the ways that slurs might ethically harm others should make the reasons for this clear.</i>
6/11	Catch-up day if we get delayed, if not, workshopping our papers.	
6/12	"What Do Grown Children Owe Their Parents?," Jane English	Final Paper due before class today, turned in on Canvas

	<p><i>Note: we will be discussing the arguments in this paper but I don't expect you to have read this. I know you'll be working on your papers. This is primarily posted to give you an idea of the subject for the day, which may be changed based on what the class votes.</i></p>	
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**Final grades will be assigned as follows:**

A	93-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69
A-	90-92	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	60-66
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72	F	0-59

**Grading Rubric for Written Work:** Guides on writing papers in philosophy will also be posted on Canvas in the assignment folder, should you need extra assistance.

**Excellent (90 – 100):** An excellent essay answers the question in a clear and concise manner. It goes beyond basic understanding and incorporates new ideas or synthesizes information to show connections between previously unmentioned concepts. It will focus on arguments rather than exposition, and the logic behind these arguments will be sound. It is free of grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors, and it fulfills the requirement without unnecessary fluff.

**Good (80 – 89):** A good essay answers the question clearly and adequately, but does not incorporate new ideas or perspectives. It may have a few grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors, but not so many that they affect the overall clarity of the essay. It may lean more heavily towards exposition than argumentation, or the argumentation present may not be entirely logically sound.

**Average (70 – 79):** An average essay attempts to provide answers to every aspect of the question, but is lacking in overall clarity and precision. It may not be a paper which falls under the purview of ethical argument. Also, the essay may miss obvious points or fail to make obvious connections. Average essays may have several grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors, which may affect the overall clarity and precision of the essay.

**Needs Improvement (60 – 69):** An essay that needs improvement may answer some parts of the question, but fails to address the question fully. It is also lacking in overall clarity. It likely contains many grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors. It may also fail to meet the word requirement.

**Unacceptable (0 – 59):** An unacceptable essay fails to answer the assigned question. It may also fail to meet the word requirement.