

# PHI 2730 – Introduction to Ethics

Monsoon 2023, Tuesday and Thursday, 8:30 to 10:00, AC04 004

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**Office:** AC01 616 | **Office Hours:** 11:50 to 12:20 Tuesdays and Thursdays

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## About this Course: Topics and Goals

Every day we face countless ethical choices. Is it okay to eat meat, or is this immoral? Should you cheat on your physics exam? Or should you burn down AC03 in the hopes of delaying the exam long enough to study? Which political parties should you support? Some of these questions are easier than others, but all of them require engaging in ethical analysis. This course is about that sort of thing.

Below are the **goals** for this course:

- Learn about some of the key approaches to and topics in ethics
- Get practice with reading, writing, talking about, and thinking about ethics in an academic setting

## Course Content

We will read 3 of the key works in the history of Western ethics because they are very insightful. The rest of the topics we study will be chosen by your votes. All readings are available on the course web site at <https://canvas.instructure.com/courses/7134081>. Do the assigned reading for each class before that class.

**Please bring the readings to class meetings**, either printed out or in *easily accessible* electronic form.

## Assignments

There are four kinds of assignments in this class: **reading quizzes**, **Perusall annotations**, **reading outlines**, and **500 word papers**. There is also an **attendance requirement** which factors into your grade. Late quizzes will have a 10% lower score for every 24 hours they are late, with a maximum reduction of 50%. Late Perusall annotations and outlines will not be accepted. 500 word papers are never late, but they have suggested due dates.

**Reading Quizzes** are to help you focus on the important parts of the reading and to get instant feedback on whether you have understood the reading. There is one quiz per reading. The quiz is due 8:00 AM the day we discuss the reading but you should complete it much earlier.

**Perusall Annotation Assignments** allow you to collaboratively read the readings by using the Perusall website. This allows you to share thoughts and questions with fellow students and to see their thoughts and questions. Canvas has a document detailing examples of annotations you can make on Perusall. Your Perusall annotations are due 8:00 AM the day we discuss the reading but you should write them far earlier.

**Reading Outlines** are to help you get a comprehensive understanding of the readings and to facilitate in-class discussions. Your outlines are due 8:00 AM the day we discuss the reading but you should write them far earlier.

**500 Word Papers** are to help you practice thinking about and writing about the complicated ideas that are present in the books we read. They also help you understand those ideas through the feedback you receive. A rubric for 500 word papers is available on Canvas.

## Grading

Paper assignments will be given one of two grades: **satisfactory** or **not yet satisfactory**. The level of achievement required for a satisfactory grade is roughly equivalent to a B+. You can resubmit any not yet

satisfactory assignment for a regrade. You can submit a maximum of two papers per week. So, if you want to resubmit papers, do not leave all your resubmissions until the end of the semester.

**For an A grade:** An average score of 70% or better on the reading quizzes. An average score of 75% or better on the Perusall assignments. Eleven or more satisfactory reading outlines. Seven or more satisfactory 500 word papers. Miss six or fewer class meetings.

**For a B grade:** An average score of 60% or better on the reading quizzes. An average score of 70% or better on the Perusall assignments. Ten or more satisfactory reading outlines. Six or more satisfactory 500 word papers. Miss seven or fewer class meetings.

**For a C grade:** An average score of 50% or better on the reading quizzes. An average score of 65% or better on the Perusall assignments. Nine or more satisfactory reading outlines. Five or more satisfactory 500 word papers. Miss eight or fewer class meetings.

**For a D grade:** An average score of 40% or better on the reading quizzes. An average score of 60% or better on the Perusall assignments. Eight or more satisfactory reading outlines. Four or more satisfactory 500 word papers. Miss nine or fewer class meetings.

I currently do not anticipate assigning + or – grades, but if I do, it will likely be on the basis of participation, both in class and on Perusall.

## Office Hours and Email

You can come meet me during office hours in my office AC01 616 from 11:50 to 12:20 on Tuesdays and Thursdays without an appointment to talk about anything you would like to talk about, like feedback on your papers or questions about the readings. If you cannot meet during office hours you can email me to schedule an appointment. If you contact me via email for any reason, please include “PHI 2730” in the subject line so that I know you are emailing about this course.

## Disabilities

If you have disabilities which require some form of accommodation, contact me ahead of time.

## ChatGPT/AI

You should not use ChatGPT or other AI tools for this course. The reason I assign papers, Perusall comments, etc. is not because I need more of them. I have enough student papers to last me the rest of my life. I assign them because the process of thinking about and writing them helps **you** develop the sorts of skills you are attending university to develop. Using ChatGPT or similar AI tools prevents you from developing these skills and it thus wastes your time. It also wastes my time, because I do not care what ChatGPT has to say, nor is it useful for me to give feedback on what ChatGPT has generated.

## Important Dates

Deadline to convert course to audit, withdraw from audit, change course to or from pass/fail, and withdraw with a W: 22 October. Deadline to withdraw with a W/F: 2 December.

## Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

Any time you use **words, phrases, ideas, or anything else** in your writing that you did not think up on your own, you must **cite** your source the best of your ability. Words and phrases not written by you must be enclosed in quotation marks to show that you did not write them yourself. Failure to cite a source is **plagiarism** and it's not okay. You should not need to use (or cite) outside sources for this class, but if you do use them, you must cite them. It is perfectly okay to use points made by your classmates in discussion (or anyone else), *as long as you cite them to the best of your ability*. The one exception is that you do not need to cite me on your writing assignments in this class, unless you want to. Plagiarism or other violations of academic integrity, like cheating on quizzes, may entail sanctions like an F in the course.

## Resources

My website has resources on reading, writing, and researching at <http://dannyweltman.com/resources.html>. I encourage you to look at the resources that are available there.

## Initial Schedule and Readings

29 August: Anscombe, “Must One Obey One’s Conscience?”

31 August: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1

5 September: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Books 2 and 3

7 September: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 4

12 September: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7

14 September: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 10

19 September: Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* Preface and Section 1

21 September: Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* Section 2 up to page 42/Ak 4:425

26 September: Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* Section 2 page 42/Ak 4:426 through the end of the section

28 September: Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* Section 3

3 October: Mill, *Utilitarianism* Chapters 1 and 2

5 October: Mill, *Utilitarianism* Chapters 3 and 4

17 October: Mill, *Utilitarianism* Chapter 5

The rest of the schedule depends on the topics we vote for. Below are the options. If you have suggestions for other topics, let me know.

## Metaethics

**African Ethics:** Molefe, “African Ethics and Agent-Centred Duties”; Etieyibo, “On the *One Concept* and *Many Accounts* of African Ethics”

**Evolutionary Debunking of Morality:** Street, “Does Anything Matter or Did We Just Evolve to Think it Did?”; Isserow, “Evolutionary Hypotheses and Moral Skepticism”

**Is Morality Objective:** Enoch, “Why I am an Objectivist about Ethics (And Why You Are, Too)”; Williams, “The Truth in Relativism”

**Moral Luck:** Nagel, “Moral Luck”; Williams, “Moral Luck”

**Moral Skepticism:** Mackie, selections from *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*; Brink, “Moral realism and the sceptical arguments from disagreement and queerness”

**Moral Uncertainty:** Harman, “The Irrelevance of Moral Uncertainty”; Sepielli, “How Moral Uncertainty Can Be Both True and Interesting”

**Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives:** Foot, “Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives”; Brink, “A Puzzle About the Rational Authority of Morality”; Shafer-Landau, “A Defence of Categorical Reasons”

**Morality without God:** Plato, *Euthyphro*; Brink, “The Autonomy of Ethics”; Rogers, “God and Moral Realism”; Zagzebski, “Does Ethics Need God?”

**Saints and the Difficulty of Being Moral:** Wolf, “Moral Saints”; Adams, “Saints”

## Normative Ethics

**Care Ethics:** Gilligan, “In a Different Voice”; Noddings, “An Ethic of Caring”

**Communicative Ethics:** Habermans, Selections from *The Inclusion of the Other*

**Contractarianism:** Scanlon, “Contractualism and Utilitarianism”

**Buddhist Ethics:** Siderits, “Buddhist Ethics”; Carpenter, “Kleśas and compassion”

**Existentialist Ethics:** Beauvoir, Selections from *The Ethics of Ambiguity*; Sartre, Selections from “Existentialism is a Humanism”

**Feminist Ethics:** Frye, “Sexism”; Baier, “The Need for More than Justice”; Walker, “Feminist Skepticism, Authority, and Transparency”

**Jaina Ethics:** Soni, “Jaina Virtue Ethics: Action and Nonaction”; Mitra, “Jainism and Environmental Ethics: An Exploration”

**Moral Particularism:** Dancy, “An Unprincipled Morality”; Little, “On Knowing the ‘Why’: Particularism and Moral Theory”; Dworkin, “Unprincipled Ethics”

**Vedantic Ethics:** Sreekumar, “An Analysis of Consequentialism and Deontology in the Normative Ethics of the Bhagavadgītā”; Ranganathan, “Three Vedāntas: Three Accounts of Character, Freedom, and Responsibility”

## Applied Ethics

**Abortion:** Warren, “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion” and “The Moral Difference Between Infanticide and Abortion: A Response to Robert Card”; Card, “Infanticide and the Liberal View of Abortion”; Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”

**Drug Legalization:** Husak, “Four Points about Drug Decriminalization”; Sher, “On the decriminalization of drugs”; de Marneffe, “Against the legalization of heroin”; Hunt, “Epilogue: What good are drugs anyway?”

**Eating Animals:** Diamond, “Eating Meat and Eating People”; Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs, and People”; Warren, “Eating Meat as a Morally Permissible Moral Mistake”

**Karma:** Potter, “How many karma theories are there?”; Matilal, “*Karma* and the moral order”; Mohapatra, “Karma as a Theory of Retributive Morality” and “Niskama Karma: A Critical Assessment”

**Monogamy:** Chalmers, “Is Monogamy Morally Permissible?” and “Monogamy Unredeemed”; York, “Why Monogamy is Morally Permissible” and “A Couple of Reasons in Favor of Monogamy”

**Multiculturalism and Sexism:** Okin, “Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?”; Selected replies

**Non-Human Animals:** Singer, “All Animals are Equal”; Steinbock, “Speciesism and the Idea of Equality”

**Patriotism and Nationalism:** Nathanson, “In Defense of Moderate Patriotism”; Gombert, “Patriotism is Like Racism”; Hurka, “The Justification of National Partiality”; Lichtenberg, “Nationalism, For and (Mainly) Against”

**Population Control:** Callahan, “Ethics and Population Limitation”; Sen, “Fertility and Coercion”; Conly, “The Right to Procreation: Merits and Limits”; Greaves, “Climate Change and Optimum Population”; Räikkä, “Coercive population policies, procreative freedom, and morality”

**Same-Sex Marriage:** Benn, “The Gay Marriage Debate – Afterthoughts”; Card, “Gay Divorce: Thoughts on the Legal Regulation of Marriage” and “Against Marriage and Motherhood”; Hartley and Watson, “Political Liberalism, Marriage and the Family”

**Sex Selection:** Sterri, “Sex selection in India: Why a ban is not justified”; Rogers, Ballantyne, and Draper, “Is Sex-Selective Abortion Morally Justified and Should it be Prohibited?”; Shahvisi, “Engendering Harm A Critique of Sex Selection for Family Balancing”; Zilberberg, “Sex Selection and Restricting Abortion and Sex Determination”

**The Annihilation of Caste:** Ambedkar, “The Annihilation of Caste”; Gandhi, “A Vindication of Caste”; Ambedkar, “A Reply to the Mahatma”