

PHI 2730 – Introduction to Ethics

Monsoon 2020, AC02 TR002 except actually just online, Wednesday and Friday 8:30 AM – 10:00 AM

Professor: Danny Weltman | danny.weltman@ashoka.edu.in | **Office Hours:** by appointment

About This Course: Topic 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 have been chosen by your votes. All readings are available on the course web site at <https://canvas.instructure.com/courses/2123099>. 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. It may be helpful to print the readings out even for our remote meetings so that you can write on them, easily flip through them, and refer to them without having to switch what you are looking at on your computer screen.

Assignments and Grading

There are five kinds of assignments in this class: **reading quizzes**, **discussion questions**, **500 word papers**, **paper revisions**, and **Perusall participation**. Late assignments will lose 10% per day they are late, up to a maximum of 50% off. The late penalty is calculated per hour (0.42% lost per hour).

Reading Quizzes (10% of your grade) are to help you focus on the important parts of the reading and to get instant feedback on whether you have understood the reading. Quizzes are due 8 AM the day we discuss the relevant reading. There is 1 quiz per class session, for a total of 26 quizzes. The 16 lowest scoring quizzes will be ignored.

Discussion Questions (10% of your grade) help you think about the texts more deeply and evaluate your own gaps in understanding or potential criticisms. There is 1 question per week, for a total of 13 questions. The 8 lowest scoring questions will be ignored.

500 Word Papers (35% of your grade) are your opportunity to get more practice writing concisely about philosophy. They should summarize a point from one of the readings, and then offer a **question**, an **extension of the idea**, or a **critique of the idea**. There are 8 due. The 5 lowest scoring papers will be ignored.

Paper Revisions (35% of your grade) are for you to get practice incorporating feedback and revising your writing. There are 8 due. The 5 lowest scoring revisions will be ignored.

Perusall Participation (10% of your grade) is a chance to improve your reading skills by collaboratively commenting on the reading assignments. Comments are due by 8 AM the day we discuss the relevant reading.

Grade Breakdown:

- 10% - Reading Quizzes (26, lowest 16 ignored)
- 20% - Discussion Questions (13, lowest 8 ignored)
- 30% - 500 Word Papers (8, lowest 5 ignored)
- 30% - Paper Revisions (8, lowest 5 ignored)
- 10% - Perusall Participation

Class Grade Rubric:

100-97% = A+	<80-77% = C+
<97-94% = A	<77-74% = C
<94-90% = A-	<74-70% = C-
<90-87% = B+	<70-67% = D+
<87-84% = B	<67-64% = D
<84-80% = B-	<64-60% = D-
	<60-0% = F

Online Logistics

While our course is online (which may be the entire semester) this course will be largely *asynchronous*: this means you will not be required to attend course meetings during our scheduled class time. However, during our class meeting times, we will have online course meetings. Sometimes these will be Q&A sessions in which I will answer the discussion questions you have posted and any other questions. Other times they will just be open sessions for discussion. You can attend these sessions live and ask follow-up questions and new questions, and to discuss the readings with me and with your other classmates. These sessions will be recorded and posted so that you can watch them if you are not able to attend.

I encourage everyone to turn on their video during online meetings, especially when they are talking, because it is useful to get non-verbal cues from listeners and it is extremely useful to get non-verbal cues from speakers, especially for people whose speakers or headphones are not very good and for people who have hearing difficulties. However, you are not required to keep your camera on when you are attending class.

Disabilities

If you have disabilities which require some form of accommodation, contact me ahead of time. I can provide transcriptions of recorded videos as long as I have enough advanced notice.

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 from others 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. Plagiarism may result in a zero on the assignment or in other point reductions. 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 class or in discussion questions, *as long as you cite them to the best of your ability*. The one exception is that you do not need to cite my lectures for your writing assignments in this class.

Office Hours, Email Communication, and Due Date Extensions

If you have questions or comments about the course you can email me to set up a time to meet. If you contact me via email, please include "PHI 2730" in the subject line so that I know you are emailing about this course. All of the assignment due dates are available in advance and they are designed so that they can be done in advance, so if you anticipate not having enough time to do the assignment right before it is due, you should do the assignment earlier, rather than asking for a due date extension. Thus you should plan for exigencies like illness or Internet unavailability, rather than asking for an extension on assignments. But, if you think that there are relevant concerns that suggest that you should be granted an extension, please ask me as soon as possible.

Extra Credit

You earn an automatic 2% extra credit towards your grade in this course by reading and understanding this syllabus. This credit will be added to your grade by default at the end of the course and the only way to lose it is by emailing me a question which is already answered on the syllabus.

Resources

My website has resources on reading, writing, and researching at <http://danielweltman.com/resources.html>. These resources include a glossary for unfamiliar words or phrases. I encourage you to examine these resources.

Due Dates for Papers and Paper Revisions

Moral Skepticism: paper due 8 Nov. Revisions due 22 Nov.

Existentialism: Paper due 17 Nov. Revisions due 29 Nov.

Moral Objectivity: Paper due 22 Nov. Revision due 13 Dec.

Abortion: Paper due 2 Dec. Revision due 18 Dec.

Eating Animals: Paper due 11 Dec (if you want to write a revision), 18 Dec otherwise. Revision due 18 Dec.

Schedule and Readings

2 September: Course Introduction and Anscombe, "Must One Obey One's Conscience?"

4 September: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1

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

11 September: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 4

16 September: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 7

18 September: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book 10

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

25 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

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

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

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

21 October: Mill, *Utilitarianism* Chapter 5

23 October: Mackie, selections from *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*

28 October: Brink, "Moral realism and the sceptical arguments from disagreement and queerness"

4 November: de Beauvoir, "Moral Idealism and Political Realism"

6 November: Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism" pages 22-39

7 November: Sartre, "Existentialism is a Humanism" pages 44-51

11 November: Williams, "The Truth in Relativism"

13 November: Enoch, "Why I am an Objectivist about Ethics (And Why You Are, Too)"

18 November: Warren, "On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion"

20 November: Card, "Infanticide and the Liberal View of Abortion"

25 November: Warren, "The Moral Difference between Infanticide and Abortion: A Response to Robert Card"

27 November: Diamond, "Eating Meat and Eating People"

2 December: Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs, and People"

4 December: Harman, "Eating Meat as a Morally Permissible Moral Mistake" and Narain, "Why I Would Not Advocate Vegetarianism"