

PHI 4730 – Advanced Ethics

Monsoon 2020, AC02 TR003 but actually online, Wednesday and Friday 10:10 AM – 11:40 AM

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

About This Course: Topic and Goals

In this course we will read some recent books about ethics from cover to cover. The books to be read will be chosen by your votes.

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

- Read some recent books about ethics and learn what they have to say
- Get practice with reading, writing, talking about, and thinking about advanced topics in ethics

Course Content

The content of the course is up to your votes. I've provided a list of books to choose from but suggestions are encouraged, either topic-based or specific books. All readings are available on the course web site at <https://canvas.instructure.com/courses/2278967>. Do the assigned reading for each class before each class.

Please have the readings available during class meetings, either printed out or in *easily accessible* electronic form. It may be helpful to print the readings out (or to buy the book) 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. Some of the books are very expensive but others can be purchased for a reasonable amount of money.

Assignments and Grading

There are 5 kinds of assignments in this class: **discussion questions, discussion replies, Perusall participation, chapter outlines/summaries, and final take-home exam or paper**. Late assignments will lose 10% per day they are late, up to a maximum of 50% off.

Discussion Questions (20% 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 after the first week, for a total of 12 questions. The 4 lowest scoring questions will be ignored. You can either write them or record a video.

Discussion Replies (10% of your grade) are for you to get practice discussing the texts by engaging with the ideas of other students. You can either write them or record a video. If you have 10 or more good replies by the end of the semester you get full credit. If you have fewer then you get 9% (for 9 good replies), 8% for 8, etc.

Perusall Participation (10% of your grade) is a chance to improve your reading skills by collaboratively commenting on the readings. Comments are due by 11:59 PM the night before we discuss the relevant reading in class. I've never used Perusall, so if the grading for this turns out weird, I might reduce or eliminate this component of the grade, in which case I'll let you know what the new grading structure is.

Chapter Outlines/Summaries (20% of your grade) are to help you develop a more extensive and complete understanding of the text by compiling an outline of one of the readings, and to help you refine your skills at deciding what is or isn't an important feature to focus on. Outlines are due one week after we finish the book. If you have 5 or more good outlines by the end of the semester you get full credit. If you have fewer then you lose one fifth of your chapter outline total grade for each missing outline.

The **Take-Home Final Exam** (40% of your grade) will ask you to summarize points from some of the readings we have done, and then offer **extensions of the idea or argument** or **critiques of the idea or argument**. The exam is divided into a few parts, one part for each book we read. Each part is graded out of 50 points. The exam is due December 16th but you can turn in any or all of its parts early.

Early final exam sections will be graded and returned within ten days. If you turn in a part any time within a week after the reading assignment for that book is due, it will get an extra five points. I will announce the specific due dates for extra credit once we have picked our readings.

If you would prefer, you can write a **Final Paper** instead of the final exam. The final paper is about 3,500 to 4,500 words long. It requires you to formulate a question related to one of the books we've read and to answer that question by doing a bit of original research. If you would like to write a final paper, please talk to me about it by the end of mid-term break (October 18th). The paper is due the same time as the final exam.

Grade Breakdown:

20% - Discussion Questions
(12, lowest 4 ignored)
10% - Discussion Replies
10% - Perusall Participation
20% - Chapter Outlines/Summaries
**40% - Take-Home Final Exam or
Final Paper**

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 will likely 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, we will still have class meetings at the scheduled class time, and if you are able to attend I strongly encourage you to do so, because these texts are difficult and discussion is very helpful for understanding them.

Disabilities

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

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 their 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 me for your writing assignments in this class.

Office Hours, Email Communication, and Due Date Extensions

If you have questions or comments about the course it is best to talk during office hours by contacting me to set up a time to meet. If you contact me via email, please include "PHI 4730" in the subject line so that I know you are emailing about this course. All of the assignment due dates are available 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.

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.

Potential Readings

This is the list I've come up with. If there is anything you would like to add to the list before we vote, please let me know quickly! The requirements are: relatively recent (within the last 10 years would be good), about ethics (broadly construed), available free online (illegally, typically). Ideally, the online copy should be a good copy, rather than a 140 megabyte badly-scanned PDF file which is hard to read and which we cannot copy and paste from. If you are aware of a book about the ethics of using illegally acquired digital copies of ethics books for an ethics course, let me know and I will add it to the list.

Arash Abizadeh, *Hobbes and the Two Faces of Ethics*

Mariam al-Attar, *Islamic Ethics: Divine Command Theory in Arabo-Islamic Thought*

Anna Alexandrova, *A Philosophy for the Science of Well-Being*

Andrew Altman and Lori Watson, *Debating Pornography*

Elizabeth Barnes, *The Minority Body: A Theory of Disability*

Anne Margaret Baxley, *Kant's Theory of Virtue*

Indian Ethics: Classical Traditions and Contemporary Challenges edited by Joseph Prabhu, Purushottama Bilimoria, and Renuka M. Sharma

Michael Bishop, *The Good Life: Unifying the Philosophy and Psychology of Well-Being*

David Brink, *Mill's Progressive Principles*

Berit Brogaard, *On Romantic Love: Simple Truths about a Complex Emotion*

Cheshire Calhoun, *Doing Valuable Time: The Present, the Future, and Meaningful Living*

Ethics Without Self, Dharma Without Atman: Western and Buddhist Philosophical Traditions in Dialogue edited by Gordon Davis

Diana Heney, *Toward a Pragmatist Metaethics*

Collectivity: Ontology, Ethics, and Social Justice edited by Kendy M. Hess, Violetta Igneski, and Tracy Isaacs

Exploring Agency in the Mahābhārata: Ethical and Political Dimensions of Dharma edited by Sibesh Chandra Bhattacharya, Vrinda Dalmiya, and Gangeya Mukherji

Serene Khader, *Decolonizing Universalism: A Transnational Feminist Ethic*

Christine Korsgaard, *Fellow Creatures: Our Obligations to the Other Animals*

Mariska Leunissen, *From Natural Character to Moral Virtue in Aristotle*

Neil Levy, *Hard Luck: How Luck Undermines Free Will and Moral Responsibility*

Kate Manne, *Down Girl: The Logic of Misogyny*

P. K. Mohapatra, *An Applied Perspective on Indian Ethics*

Martha Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness: Resentment, Generosity, Justice*

Onora O'Neill, *From Principles To Practice: Normativity And Judgement In Ethics And Politics*

Jonas Olson, *Moral Error Theory: History, Critique, Defence*

Lisa Tessman, *When Doing the Right Thing Is Impossible*

Justin Tosi and Brandon Warmke, *Grandstanding: The Use and Abuse of Moral Talk*

Kenneth Valpey, *Cow Care in Hindu Animal Ethics*