

ETHICS

Philosophy PHI 330

Intersession, Summer I, May 14 – 25, 2018

Monday – Friday, 10:00-12:00 and 13:00-15:00

Instructor: **Magdalena Balcerak Jackson**

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Office Hours: by appointment

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1. COURSE CONTENT

Ethics asks fundamental questions such as: How ought we to live? How do we do the right thing? What are our moral duties? And how can we be a virtuous person?

The answers to these fundamental questions matter for answering practical problems we face in our lives as individuals and as members of a society: Is it ever ok to torture somebody? Is abortion permissible? Are we allowed to eat meat? Can we wrong somebody merely by what we say? What do we owe to people who live in poverty?

In this course, we will discuss different approaches to answering these questions and solving these problems.

2. COURSE FORMAT AND COURSE MATERIAL

The course will be mostly a discussion and exercise course. I will only lecture for limited periods during our meetings, when I need to give you the background against which you can then analyse and discuss the material as a group.

We will work with a variety of different materials: texts by philosophers, texts by scientists, internet articles and video material.

You should purchase one textbook:

- Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, Third Edition, Oxford University Press 2015. (Please, purchase the correct edition!)

All other material will be made accessible to you via Blackboard or in class.

3. LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND STUDENT OUTCOMES

Learning Objectives	Student Outcomes
Understand selected important debates, positions and methods in ethics	Explain the debates and frameworks clearly and precisely Extract and charitably reconstruct arguments from different sources: philosophical texts, scientific texts, videos Construct and evaluate thought experiments and arguments for and against philosophical hypotheses
Understand basic concepts and distinctions from the philosophy of science	Explain the basic concepts and distinctions Apply the basic concepts and distinctions in new contexts, and specifically to contemporary moral problems from everyday life Use the introduced basic concepts and distinction when constructing your own arguments
Develop original ideas about selected debates in applied ethics	Justify your own hypotheses about contemporary moral problems by systematically providing reasons for them and defending your view against objections orally and in writing Write clear, precise and modestly original argumentative essays on topics in applied ethics

4. COURSE PRE-REQUISITES

The only pre-requisite for this course is curiosity about philosophy, preparedness to read and to work on different texts and materials, and willingness to engage in rational, open and respectful discussions about various philosophical ideas and about arguments concerning topics in ethics.

5. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

There are three basic course requirements: discussion participation, individual and group exercises, and one argumentative paper.

Discussion Participation (20%):

- You are required to attend the class meetings regularly. At most one day of absence or the equivalent number of hours of absence are compatible with passing the course. You should come prepared: You should have read the assigned texts and you should bring a copy of the assigned text with you to class. Most importantly, you are asked to participate in the class meetings actively by contributing regularly to classroom discussion.

Exercises (40%):

- **Two Individual Exercises (20%):** You will complete two individual graded exercises in class that test your understanding of the ethical frameworks and your ability to apply them to contemporary moral problems.
- **Two Group Exercises (20%):** You will complete two graded group exercises in class that test your understanding of the ethical frameworks and your ability to apply them to contemporary moral problems.

Argumentative Paper Project (40%):

- You are required to write an original argumentative paper (4000 words for those who want writing credit, and 2500 words for those who do not need writing credit). The paper project will proceed in three stages.
 - **Topic Proposal (ungraded, but required)**
 - **Draft and Presentation (20%)**
 - **Final Version (20%)**

The course will include writing workshops to help you with your paper project.

6. GRADING STANDARDS

Your final paper will be graded using a rubric that specifies the criteria for the assignment. The grading rubric will be made available to you together with the relevant assignment on Blackboard. If you have questions about the criteria I will be using to assess your work, please talk to me.

7. GRADING POLICIES

- **Submitting Written Work:** All written work has to be submitted by the due date via Blackboard in PDF format. The assignments will be distributed via Blackboard in advance.
- **Late Work:** No late work will be accepted without penalty. If you have a legitimate reason for being unable to complete an assignment or exam by the assigned date, talk to me before the due date in order to arrange for an extension.
- **Cheating / Plagiarism / Collusion:** Cheating, plagiarism and collusion, as defined by the University of Miami Honor Code, are serious academic offenses. Any case that will be discovered will result in an F for the class, and it will be reported.

8. INCLUSIVENESS COMMITMENTS

- **Integration Statement:** Any student who because of disabling conditions may require some special arrangements in order to meet course requirements should contact me as well as Disabilities Services in the Academic Development Center, N201, Whitten University Center as soon as they can. I will do my best to provide an accessible and integrative learning environment for all participants.
- **Religious Holidays:** Students who will be observing religious holidays will be excused for absence from class provided that they inform me in writing within the first two weeks of the term.

9. RESOURCES

- **PhilPapers:** PhilPapers is an online directory of professional papers in philosophy written in the last appr. 50 years: <http://philpapers.org/>
- **Jim Pryor's Teaching Website:** This website has excellent advice on how to write a paper in analytic philosophy
<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
- **UM Writing Center:** The Writing Center works to teach students ways to improve their writing, but tutors will not proofread or edit papers or talk with you about grades. It is helpful to bring your assignment prompt with you on your visit. To make an appointment, call (305) 284-2956 or [visit the Writing Center website](#).

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

subject to change, all changes will be announced in class and on Blackboard

Date	Topic	Reading/Background Material	In Class Work and Assignments
Day 1	Autonomy and Getting What You Want Dilemma I: Euthanasia	Shafer-Landau, ch. 3-4 Movie: "Million Dollar Baby"	Workshop: Critical Thinking
Day 2	Consequentialism Dilemma II: Torture	Shafer-Landau, ch. 9-10 Text: JJC Smart, Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism Movie: "Prisoners"	Individual Exercise
Day 3	Kantian Ethics Dilemma III: The Business World	Shafer-Landau, ch. 11-12 Text: Kant, The Good Will and the Categorical Imperative Movie: "The Big Short"	Group Exercise
Day 4	Virtue Ethics and the Role of Empathy Dilemma IV: Empathy for the Evil	Shafer-Landau, ch. 17-18 Text: Movie (select one): "Dead Man Walking", "We Need To Talk About Kevin", "Hotel Rwanda"	Individual Exercise
Day 5	Abortion Spotlight: Ethics and Religion	JJ Thompson, A Defense of Abortion Don Marquis, Why Abortion Is Immoral	Group Exercise
Day 6	Food Choices Spotlight: Non-human subjects	A Norcross, Puppies, Pigs and People T Regan, The Case for Animal Rights	Writing Workshop I

Day 7	Helping the Poor Spotlight: Paternalism	P Singer, The Singer Solution to World Poverty A Banerjee / E Duflo, Poor Economics (excerpt)	Writing Workshop II
Day 8	Enhancement Spotlight: Designing Ourselves	M Sandel, The Case Against Perfection J Savulescu, Genetic Interventions and the Ethics of Enhancement of Human Beings	Writing Workshop III
Day 9	Harmful Speech Spotlight: Unusual Actions	Online Materials	Presentation Workshop
Day 10	Your Problems, Your Ideas	---	Presentations and Feedback
Final Paper due: tba			