

Philosophy 360.01H—Honors General Ethics

Spring 2015

Dr. Bill Bolin

Office & Hours: HL 324, MW 2:30p—5:00p and by appt.

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will allow you many opportunities to explore important ethical issues that people have pondered over the centuries. We will read a number of works that explore different ideas about ethics and moral behavior, paying attention to the various systems of ethics that have been described historically, including deontological ethics, utilitarian ethics, virtue ethics, and the ethics of care. The course is organized so that conflicting, competing, and even complementary theories will be investigated and can be discussed in interesting and civil ways. Assignments include two essay exams, a few objective quizzes over the reading, two short (1-2 pages) written responses to the reading, and one paper of 5-6 pages examining a contemporary issue in light of one ethical system. Three textbooks are required:

- Cahn, Steven M. *Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford UP, 2014. ISBN: 9780199946587
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Robert Crisp. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2000. ISBN: 9780521635462 (But any version with numbered sections, including this free online version <<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>>, will be fine.)
- Singer, Peter. *The Life You Can Save: Acting Now to End World Poverty*. New York: Random House, 2009. ISBN: 9781400067107 (But any version will be fine.)

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Students will write response papers and a research-based paper that demonstrate an understanding of established approaches to defining and understanding ethics.
- Students will write two exams that demonstrate understanding of the main schools of thought in ethics.
- Students will be able to view themselves as engaged citizens within an interconnected and diverse world, and this ability will be assessed through a response paper.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To acquire an overview of the various approaches to understanding ethics in the discipline of philosophy.
- to acquire an overview of the various cultural and social influences on thinking about ethical behavior.
- to formulate articulate responses to the reading assignments and ensuing discussions.

ASSIGNMENTS

Exams: You'll have a mid-term and a final, each covering roughly half of the semester. These exams will solicit short answers of 3 or 4 sentences, as well as longer, more richly detailed essay responses. Submit two blank blue books with your name on them before the midterm.

Response papers: In addition, you'll turn in two written responses (300-400 words each) to some of the reading assignments. These responses are not designed to test how well you've read the assigned material. Rather, they serve as opportunities for you to comment on one or two points in the reading, connecting those points to other reading and/or experiences. Each response paper will be evaluated according to the level of detail in your insightful commentary and sensible connections to other reading and/or experiences or observations. Specific assignments are forthcoming in eCollege.

Research Paper: In this paper of 5-6 pages, you will explore and evaluate a contemporary ethical issue in light of at least one of the four ethical systems we will cover in class. Ideally, this ethical issue will be related to your academic major. A separate assignment sheet is forthcoming in eCollege.

Quizzes: You'll take six quizzes to test your comprehension of some of the reading. These timed quizzes will be in eCollege and cannot easily be made up. Each quiz will be announced as the semester progresses, so be attentive to their deadlines.

As a rule I do not accept late assignments.

EVALUATION

Assignment Values	Final Grade Ranges
Midterm Exam 40 pts.	A=180--200
Final Exam 40 pts.	B=160--179
Research Paper 40 pts.	C=140--159
Response Papers 20 pts. (2@ 10 pts. each)	D=120--139
Quizzes 60 pts. (6 @ 10 pts. each)	F=0--119

ATTENDANCE

Regular attendance is important for several reasons, but it is especially important for you to keep up with the assignments in this class. The tentative calendar below offers only the most general description of activities; more detail will be provided in class as the semester goes on. If you are absent the day an assignment is due, you must contact me and make satisfactory arrangements for turning in the assignment. In most cases, such arrangements will include your emailing the assignment to me as an attachment by the deadline. Failure to make *prior satisfactory* arrangements will result in your forfeiting the right to turn in that assignment. As per university policy, excessive absences (three weeks' worth) may result in your being dropped from the course.

PLAGIARISM/ACADEMIC DISHONESTY STATEMENT

Instructors in the Department of Literature and Languages do not tolerate plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty. Instructors uphold and support the highest academic standards, and students are expected to do likewise. Penalties for students guilty of academic dishonesty include disciplinary probation, suspension, and expulsion. (Texas A&M University-Commerce

Code of Student Conduct 5.b[1,2,3]). Plagiarism on one assignment in this course will most likely lead to a failing grade for the course.

TENTATIVE CALENDAR (All reading assignments are from the textbook unless otherwise indicated. A few other readings will likely be assigned as the semester progresses.)

Jan. 21 Overview: Intro to class; reflective writing

Jan. 23 Introduction: Frankena, "Morality and Moral Philosophy"; Lecture on Socrates

Jan. 26 Introduction: Plato, from *Crito* and from *Phaedo*

Jan. 28 Introduction: Plato, from *Crito* and from *Phaedo*, continued

Jan. 30 Introduction: King, "Letter from a Birmingham Jail"

Feb. 2 Aristotle: *NE*, Book I

Feb. 4 Challenges to Morality: Regan, "How Not to Answer Moral Questions"

Feb. 6 Challenges to Morality: Rachels, "The Challenge of Moral Relativism"; **RP1 due**

Feb. 9 Aristotle: *NE*, Book II

Feb. 11 Moral Theories: Kant, "The Categorical Imperative"

Feb. 13 Moral Theories: O'Neill, "A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics"

Feb. 16 Aristotle: *NE*, Book III

Feb. 18 Moral Theories: Mill, "Utilitarianism"

Feb. 20 Moral Theories: Pojman, "Strengths and Weaknesses of Utilitarianism"

Feb. 23 Aristotle: *NE*, Book IV

Feb. 25 Moral Theories: Held, "The Ethics of Care"

Feb. 27 Moral Theories: Lachman, "Applying the Ethics of Care to Your Nursing Practice" [in DocSharing]

Mar. 2 Aristotle: *NE*, Book V

Mar. 4 Moral Theories: Mayo, "Virtue Ethics"; Lecture on Anscombe

Mar. 6 Moral Theories: Virtue Ethics and exam review.

Mar. 9 **Midterm Exam**

Mar. 11 Aristotle: *NE*, Book VI

Mar. 13 Moral Theories: Hobbes, "The Social Contract"; Rawls, "A Theory of Justice"

Spring Break

Mar. 23 Aristotle: *NE*, Book VII

Mar. 25 Terrorism: Walzer, "Terrorism"

Mar. 27 Terrorism: McPherson, "Is Terrorism Distinctively Wrong?"

Mar. 30 Aristotle: *NE*, Book VIII;

Apr. 1 Animal Rights: Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights"

Apr. 3 Animal Rights: Cohen, “Why Animals Have No Rights”; Warren, “Speaking of Animal Rights” [online class meeting]

Apr. 6 Aristotle: *NE*, Book IX

Apr. 8 Torture: Shue, “Torture”

Apr. 10 Torture: Hill, “Ticking Time Bombs, Torture, and the Analogy with Self-Defense”; **RP2 due**

Apr. 13 Aristotle: *NE*, Book X

Apr. 15 Philanthropy: Singer, chaps. 1-3

Apr. 17 Philanthropy: Singer, chaps. 1-3, cont.

Apr. 20 Philanthropy: Singer, chaps. 4-5

Apr. 22 Philanthropy: Singer, chaps. 4-5, cont.

Apr. 24 Philanthropy: Singer, chaps. 6-7

Apr. 27 Philanthropy: Singer, chaps. 6-7, cont.; **Paper due**

Apr. 29 Philanthropy: Singer, chaps. 8-Afterword

May 1 Philanthropy: Singer, chaps. 8-Afterword, cont.

May 4 Philanthropy: Arthur, “World Hunger and Moral Obligation”; McGugan, “The Ice Bucket Racket: <http://nyti.ms/1x1m52g>

May 6 Life and Death: Thomson, “The Trolley Problem”; “Turning the Trolley”; Nagel, “Death”

May 8 Review: “In Life and Business, Learning to Be Ethical” <http://nyti.ms/1a6zZ8d>

Wednesday, May 13 @ 10:30a—12:30p **Final Exam**

Students with Disabilities:

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please contact:

Office of Student Disability Resources and Services

Texas A&M University-Commerce

Gee Library

Room 132

Phone (903) 886-5150 or (903) 886-5835

Fax (903) 468-8148

StudentDisabilityServices@tamuc.edu

All students enrolled at the University shall follow the tenets of common decency and acceptable behavior conducive to a positive learning environment. (See Student's Guide Handbook, Policies and Procedures, Conduct)¹

¹ In other words, don't be a distraction during class.