

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS
PHIL 160
Summer Session I

This is a draft syllabus. The finalized syllabus will be available one week before the beginning of Summer Session I.

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Course Goals:

This course is an introduction to ethical theory, and is designed for those people who want to learn about some of the greatest theories ever developed to answer the question “How should I live?” and to develop a philosophical toolkit to answer these questions for themselves. The first half of the course will survey some of the classics—Mill’s *Utilitarianism*, Kant’s *Groundwork to the Metaphysics of Morals*, and Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics*, as well as contemporary developments and criticisms of their views about what morality demands of us and why. The second half of the course will focus on interesting questions for morality: (i) What is the connection, if any, between acting morally and living a good, happy, or fulfilling life? (ii) What conditions would have to hold for us to meet the demands of morality? and (iii) What makes life worth living? These questions have a big impact on how we approach many of our day-to-day decisions, and so we will be constantly addressing the real importance of these ethical theories.

Course Texts:

- *Ethical Theory: An Anthology (2nd Edition)*, ed. Shafer-Landau
- Case studies and additional articles posted on Sakai [Sakai]

Grading:

- In-Class Participation: 5%
- Pick-Your-Own Participation (reading quizzes or journal entries): 15%
- 2 Required Online Quizzes: 5% each
- 1 (1-page, double spaced) Argument Reconstruction: 5%
- 2 Short (2-2 ½ page, double spaced) Papers: 10% each
- 1 Long Paper (3 pages, double spaced): 20%
- Final Exam (including questions (5%), short answer (10%), and a take-home essay (10%)): 25% total

Lateness policy:

Papers will be marked 1/3 of a letter grade down (e.g., A+ to A or B- to C+) for each day they are turned in late.

Pick-Your-Own Participation Format:

We will discuss your options on the first day of class in more detail. Generally, each student will be able to pick their preferred manner of participation. You may either (a) take a Reading Quiz on the readings, or (b) write a 1-2 paragraph Journal Entry (either giving an answer to the question from the day before OR what surprised you about the topic and what you think now). You will have 24 hours from class discussion to complete either (a) or (b). You must complete at least three Reading Quizzes OR Journal

Entries each week to get full points, and you must either pass the quiz or be evaluated as having written a thoughtful entry to get full points.

Paper Format:

MLA, 12-point Times New Roman, double spaced, name *only* on the bottom of the last page (one full page after the end of the text portion). We will use standard formatting and font so that I may grade work blindly. Papers are progressive, and we will have writing workshops to discuss how to write good philosophy papers.

Classroom Expectations:

You are expected to participate in class discussion, and in doing so respect the views of classmates and others. Disagreement is fine and encouraged, but when doing so, please treat others with civility and respect.

Attendance:

Attendance is necessary for understanding the texts in the course, and how to read and write good philosophy. If you miss a class due to illness or a comparable good reason, you will be asked to do the reading quiz that day, as well as submit a half-a-page digest of each reading due that day. You should email me about any absence, expected or unexpected: I will be able to inform you about any further work that needs to be made up.

Honor Code:

All students at Carolina are expected to act on the standards of the honor code. With respect to academic work, this means that all students will act on the highest standards. More details can be found at: honor.unc.edu. Nonetheless, a few major policies:

1. **Plagiarism** is the deliberate or reckless representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own without attribution. What this means is that you should be careful *to an extreme* to cite anything that you have consulted (internet, book, person, whatever). All students at Carolina are expected to know best practices in citation—which is a bit of an ideal, since we have various educational backgrounds. So if you are unsure, err on the side of citing the source, or use your resources: speak to me or to someone at the Writing Center.
2. **Authorized and unauthorized collaboration:** all reading quizzes, exams, and papers are to be taken or written without the assistance of any others. However, philosophy is an interactive discipline, and it can be extremely helpful to discuss the material and your work with classmates or others. If you do discuss material with another person—and gain something from it—best practice is to footnote that help: for example, “Thanks to So-and-So for pointing this out to me.” is common practice in philosophical papers.
3. **Authorized and unauthorized materials:** in this course, we will be discussing material that goes beyond our main textbook. For that reason, you are welcome to look at outside resources (book, internet, magazine). But if you *do* consult outside resources, be very judicious! Always note down what the source is and how to find it again—if you use these materials in a paper, you *must* cite them.
4. **Consequences:** Under the Instrument of Student Judicial Governance, the usual sanction for a first time academic offense is suspension for one academic semester and a failing grade.

Reading and Assignment Schedule

All readings must be read before class on the specified day.

Assignment: due by email Tuesday, May 12 at 1pm. 10-question Self-Assessment (available on Sakai or email kbhardwa@live.unc.edu for the questions).

Wednesday, May 13: What ethical commitments do you come to the table with?

- Introduction
- Review of Self-Assessment
- The great question: Why be moral?

Read: 15. Plato, *"The Immoralist's Challenge"*

Utilitarianism

Thursday, May 14: What is utilitarianism and what is attractive about it?

Read: Mill's *Utilitarianism*, Ch. 2 [Sakai]

Friday, May 15: What is the most plausible form of utilitarianism and why?

Read: 53. Singer, *"Famine, Affluence, and Morality"* and 50. Hooker, *"Rule-Consequentialism"* (Sections 1, 4-6, 10)

Writing Workshop #1

Monday, May 18: Can any form of utilitarianism escape fatal criticism?

Read: Williams, *Utilitarianism: For and Against* (Sections 3, 5) [Sakai]

Assignment: Outline of Argument Reconstruction of Mill, Singer, or Hooker due in class on May 18 (printed). No more than ½ page!

Kantianism

Tuesday, May 19: Why does Kant claim that reason requires that we act on "categorical imperatives"?

Read: 55. Kant, *"Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals"*

Wednesday, May 20: Are moral judgments universalizable?

Read: 56. Korsgaard, *"Kant's Formulation of Universal Law"* (Introduction) and 57. O'Neill, *"Kantian Approaches to Some Famine Problems"*

Assignment: 1-page Argument Reconstruction of Mill, Singer, or Hooker due by 5pm on May 20 (via Sakai)

Thursday, May 21: Must a moral action always be performed from a sense of duty?

Read: Williams, Excerpt from "Persons, character, and morality" [Sakai], 22. Wolf, *"Moral Saints"* (Sections TBD).

Writing Workshop #2

Friday, May 22: NO CLASS

Quiz: Required Reading Quiz on Kantianism (on Sakai) due by 11pm on May 22nd

Monday, May 25: NO CLASS (Memorial Day)

Virtue Ethics

Tuesday, May 26: What role should ‘virtue’ play in ethics?

Read: 66. Aristotle, “*The Nature of Virtue*”

Paper: Short Paper 1 (2-2 ½ pages) due by 5pm on May 26 (via Sakai): Give an argument reconstruction and objection to any of the papers in the Utilitarianism or Kantianism sections, OR Compare and contrast Mill and Kant’s explanation for thinking an action is wrong (this option will require *two* argument reconstructions).

Wednesday, May 27: Does virtue ethics give us appropriate guidance about how to behave?

Read: 68. Hursthouse, “*Normative Virtue Ethics*”

Feminist Ethics

Thursday, May 28: What is an “ethics of care”?

Read: 72. Gilligan, “*In a Different Voice*” and 73. Noddings, “*An Ethic of Caring*”

Friday, May 29: Discuss critically the objection that traditional moral theory has a male bias?

Read: 74. Calhoun, “*Justice, Care, and Gender Bias*” and 75. Baier, “*The Need for More than Justice*”

Writing Workshop #3

Your Own View

Monday, June 1:

- Refining your Own Views
- Preview of Coming Attractions

Assignment: (due in class—printed) on June 1. Return to your beginning self-assessment, and comment critically (in a different color or font) on what you wrote. Do you agree with what you originally wrote or not? Are there more clarifications that you would like to make?

Paper: Short Paper 2 (2-2 ½ pages) due by 5pm on June 1 (via Sakai): Give an argument reconstruction, objection to, and response from any of the papers in the Virtue Ethics or Feminist Ethics sections, OR Compare and contrast Mill and Kant’s explanation for thinking an action is wrong (this option will require *two* argument reconstructions).

Why Be Moral?

Tuesday, June 2: What’s the difference between what is prudent and what is morally required?

Reread: 15. Plato, “*The Immoralist’s Challenge*” and Why Be Moral readings [Sakai]

Wednesday, June 3: To what degree *must we* or *ought we* be self-interested?

Read: 19. Feinberg, “*Psychological Egoism*” and 21. Rachels, “*Ethical Egoism*”

Thursday, June 4: Can we argue that being moral is in our self-interest?

Read: 17. Brink, “*A Puzzle About the Rational Authority of Morality*”

Reread: 66. Aristotle, “*The Nature of Virtue*” (Selections TBD)

Friday, June 5: Can utilitarianism and/or Kantianism successfully address the problem of why you should be moral?

Read: Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Ch. 4) [Sakai]

Reread: 55. Kant, “*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*” (Selections TBD)

The Conditions for Morality

Monday, June 8: What is “compatibilism” and “incompatibilism”?

Read: 36. Taylor, “*Determinism and the Theory of Agency*” and 37. G. Strawson, “*The Impossibility of Moral Responsibility*”

Quiz: Required Reading Quiz on Why Be Moral (on Sakai) due by 11pm on June 8

Tuesday, June 9: Do we have free will? If not, can we be held morally responsible?

Read: 41. Peter Strawson, “*Freedom and Resentment*” and Frankfurt [Sakai]

Wednesday, June 10: Does moral luck affect our ability to be responsible?

Read: 39. Nagel, “*Moral Luck*”

Reread: 66. Aristotle, “*The Nature of Virtue*” and 55. Kant, “*Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*” (Sections TBD)

Pleasure and Happiness

Thursday, June 11: Are there significant differences between types of pleasure, and do these matter to wise decisions about the good life and moral responsibility?

Read: 16. Foot, “*Morality as a System of Hypothetical Imperatives*” and 22. Wolf, “*Moral Saints*”

Friday, June 12: What makes life worth living?

Read: 30. Nozick, “*The Experience Machine*” and 34. Parfit, “*What Makes Someone’s Life Go Best*”

Writing Workshop #4

Morality’s Certainty, and Conclusions

Monday, June 15: How do we know that we aren’t wrong in our moral judgments?

Read: 11. Sher, “*But I Could Be Wrong*”

- Conclusions
- Review for Final

Paper: Long Paper (3 pages, double spaced) due at 5 pm on June 15. Write on an argument from Why Be Moral, The Conditions of Morality, or Pleasure and Happiness. This will require you to write an argument reconstruction, an objection, a response, and to adjudicate.