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Course Location: Dodd Hall 394

Course Time: Tuesdays, 10–12:50am
Office: Royce Hall 166
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 5–7pm, and by appointment

PHIL. 22: INTRODUCTION TO ETHICAL THEORY



Course Description

While stopping just short of the broadest philosophical question, “What is the meaning of life?”, some ethical theories start with a question almost as large: “What is the best way to live?” Others ask, more narrowly, “How must we treat other people, in the world that we share?” Still others examine the nature of moral requirement: when we say that doing or failing to do something would be immoral, or that something is morally required, what exactly are we saying? What is morality, such that we should care about it?

We will use the resources garnered from our study of the history of ethics to investigate a range of moral questions that arise in contemporary society and contemporary ethical theory, reading work by Aristotle, Mill, Kant, Marx, Nietzsche, Beauvoir, Young, and Frye among many others. As we address all the above questions, we will search for the best answers to them, but we will also think about whether these are sensible questions at all, and we will consider how we might become more comfortable with the possibility that some or all these questions do not have any definitive answers.

Objectives

This course will provide students many opportunities to practice the fundamental skills of philosophical inquiry, including the extraction, expression, and evaluation of arguments articulated in philosophical texts; the crafting of compelling and convincing philosophical prose; and the development of one’s own informed point of view on philosophical issues. More specifically, students will learn:

1. How to produce a cogent argument and how to express it with maximum perspicuity, both in writing and orally.

2. How to articulate and even welcome objections to one's views; how to apply the principle of charity to others' opinions; and how to address objections and competing views effectively and respectfully in one's writing.
3. How to read, analyze, and articulate arguments and viewpoints in primary philosophical texts, both historical and contemporary
4. How to turn a rough idea into a polished piece of writing through the process of outlining, drafting, redrafting, and editing.
5. How to develop and defend one's own position with respect to problems that have occupied both historical and contemporary philosophers.

Texts

Readings will be made available on the course website.

Course Requirements

Attendance and Active Participation (15%). It is an expectation that you will do the required reading and actively take part in the discussion. This usually entails regular attendance and engagement in discussion during class and section, but can also be accomplished by taking part in other fora, such as office hours. More specifically, all of the following counts as active participation:

- Asking questions and engaging with the instructor and other class participants in a courteous and charitable dialogue about the week's required reading.
- Asking a classmate to clarify or repeat a point they made or asking them a question about something they said.
- Explaining that you are confused or unsure about some aspect of the course material.
- Visiting office hours or scheduling an appointment with me to discuss the material.

For further examples of effective participation, please see “**But How Do I Participate? A Sampling of Ways to Contribute to a Philosophical Conversation,**” by Olivia Bailey, which is posted to the course website.

The weekly discussion section is a vital component of the course. Philosophy is not simply a set of facts or questions that one could passively memorize; it is rather a way of approaching

important problems and thinking them through. As such, philosophy is something that is “done.” It is thus crucial to learning philosophy that it be actively practiced: the discussion section is the primary place for you to do this. Sections will provide an opportunity for all students in the class to voice their positions on the important topics we are covering from week to week, and to potentially revise and reform those positions via deliberation and debate. Your attendance and informed participation in section is expected and required.

I do of course understand that life sometimes gets in the way of attending class. Each student will thus be permitted **two “free” absences from the lecture**—i.e., two absences that will not harm your grade and for which you do not to email me or your TA or provide an excuse. In addition, each student will additionally get **one “free” absence from section**. Any absences beyond those three “free” absences will result in a 1/3 letter-grade deduction from your participation grade (e.g., an A becomes an A-; an A- becomes a B+, etc.). Exceptions to this policy will be made on a case-by-case basis when students provide a legitimate reason for missing lecture or discussion beyond the “free” absences.

Short Writing Exercise (10%). At the end of our first class, you will be given a passage from the Plato reading and asked to write a 350–450 word exposition of Plato’s argument. This will be due via the Turnitin link by **the following Friday (8/05) by 11:59pm**. Your job is to offer a close reading of the argument, breaking it down into parts that are easy to understand, even for someone who is not in the course and hasn’t read the text. You should detail and motivate the argument as clearly and concisely as possible, but you should not attempt to assess or otherwise criticize the argument. Think of the exposition as the first step in writing an argumentative essay.

Three Essays. The majority of your grade will be determined by how well you do on the two required papers you must complete for the course. Having to explain our ideas to others in writing forces us to be clear, and to be thoughtful and honest about the positions we hold. We will talk about what is expected of the problem essays, and discuss tips for writing well in philosophy, at a number of points before the papers are due.

First essay (20%). Your first essay will be a short paper of 1-2 double-spaced pages with 1-inch margins and 12 pt. font. It will ask you to address a question from the work of Plato, Aristotle, and their contemporary interlocutors. You will be able to select from among a choice of different questions.

Second essay (25%). The second essay will be a slightly longer and somewhat more complex paper of 1-2 double-spaced pages (with the same formatting as above). It will ask you to address a question concerning the topics of consequentialism, relativism,

and/or Kantianism. Again, you will be able to select from among a choice of different questions.

Third essay (30%). The third essay will be a paper of 5-6 double-spaced pages (with the same formatting as above) that will ask you to address the arguments of two or more theorists from the final third of the course and apply their arguments to a contemporary ethical issue or topic. Because the third paper will be longer and more complex than the others, you will have more time to complete it, and it will be worth a higher portion of your overall course grade. Again, you will be able to select from among a choice of different questions.

Summary Grade Breakdown and Paper Due Dates

Assignment	Length	Due	Percent of Grade
Participation	-----	-----	15%
Short Writing Exercise	350-450 words	Class 3: 8/05	10%
First Essay	1-2 pages	Class 6: 8/12	10%
Second Essay	4-5 pages	Class 12: 8/26	35%
Third Essay	5-6 pages	Class 18: 9/09	40%

Grading and Late Policy

Unless otherwise stated, all assignments will receive a letter grade based on the UCLA 4.0 scale. Papers and presentations are due at the time and date specified. Work turned in late is considered to have been turned in the next day and will be penalized 1/3 of a grade (A to A-, B- to C+, etc.) for each day late (including weekend days). Email submissions will not normally be accepted. Unless otherwise noted and under appropriate circumstances, short extensions on papers may be granted so long as they are arranged 36 hours in advance of the deadline. Extensions will not be granted within 36 hours, short of a documented emergency. **The second and third essays must be submitted to pass the course.**

Accommodations

Students needing academic accommodations based on a disability should contact the Center for Accessible Education (CAE) at (310) 825-1501 or in person at Murphy Hall A255. When possible, students should contact the CAE within the first two weeks of the term as reasonable notice is needed to coordinate accommodations. For more information visit www.cae.ucla.edu.

Academic Integrity

Plagiarism of any kind will not be tolerated. Cite all sources consulted. Students are expected to know and comply with University regulations regarding academic integrity, information about which is available here:

Student Code of Conduct: <https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/studentconductcode>

Academic Integrity: <https://www.deanofstudents.ucla.edu/Academic-Integrity>

Tips for Avoiding Plagiarism: <https://guides.library.ucla.edu/citing/plagiarism/avoid>

If you have any question about what counts as a violation of academic integrity or how to cite your sources, please consult with me. Err on the side of caution. Any standard citation style will do (Chicago, APA, MLA, etc.). If you aren't sure which to use, consider Chicago style author-date format:

https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html

Course Readings and Schedule

As you may already know, reading philosophy is challenging. Here are some resources students report they've found useful in improving their reading experience (but feel free to contact me for more guidance about reading):

- <https://www.blogs.ppls.ed.ac.uk/2017/02/28/read-philosophy-step-step-guide-confused-students/>
- <https://philosophy.arizona.edu/sites/philosophy.arizona.edu/files/Rosati%2C%20How%20to%20Read%20a%20Philosophical%20Article%20or%20Book.pdf>
- <http://melissajacquart.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/How-to-Read-Philosophy-Handout.pdf>

Recommended and further readings: In addition to the required reading for the course, I have listed, for some class sessions, *recommended* and/or *further* readings. The recommended readings are designed to help your understanding of the required readings. They will offer some exposition or clarifying addendum to the required readings. By contrast, the further readings are additional, and often more advanced, texts for those who are interested in reading more on the topic. You will not be expected to have read either of the recommended or further readings; however, you are highly encouraged to do so, as it will significantly improve your grasp of the course material.

Week 1 | Introduction and Ancient Ethics from the West

Class 1 (08/01)

Introduction: What is philosophy? What is ethics?

- Kwame Anthony Appiah, “What Will Future Generations Condemn Us For?”
- Dustin Locke, Handout, “Nihilism, Authorityism, Objectivism”

Class 2 (08/03)

Plato: Is morality one of the best human goods?

- Watch: Pamela Hieronymi, [logic mini lecture 1](#) and [logic mini lecture 2](#) (slides are also posted on course website)
- Plato, *The Republic*, Books I and II (excerpted)
- **short writing exercise assigned**

Class 3 (08/05)

Happiness and virtue.

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7, II.1-4
- Robert Nozick, “The Experience Machine”
- David Sosa, “The Spoils of Happiness”
- **short writing exercise due by 11:59pm**

Week 2 | Relativism and Consequentialism

Class 4 (08/08)

Judging others and moral relativism.

- Harry Gensler, “Cultural Relativism”
 - Carole Rovane, “Moral Dispute or Cultural Difference?”
 - Mary Midgley, “Trying Out One’s New Sword”
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- *Recommended Reading:* James Dreier, “Harman on Moral Relativism”
 - *Further Reading:* Martha Nussbaum, “Judging Other Cultures: The Case of Genital Mutilation”
 - *Further Reading:* Jesse Prinz, “Morality is a Culturally Conditioned Response”
 - **essay 1 prompt assigned**

Class 5 (08/10)

Consequentialism and its discontents.

- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (selections)
 - Ursula K. Le Guin, “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas”
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- *Recommended Reading:* John Stuart Mill, “Hedonism” (from *Utilitarianism*)
 - *Further Reading:* Jeremy Bentham, “The Principle of Utility”
 - *Further Reading:* Bryan Van Norden, “Mohist Consequentialism”
 - *Further Reading:* Bernard Williams, “A Critique of Utilitarianism”

Class 6 (08/12)

Applied consequentialism.

- Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”
 - Watch: [Beth Barnes “Effective Altruism”](#)
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- *Recommended Reading:* Peter Singer, “The Singer Solution to World Poverty”

Week 3 | The Critique of Effective Altruism, and Kant

Class 7 (08/15)

“Conscience Laundering” and the Critique of EA.

- Peter Buffet, “The Charitable-Industrial Complex”
 - Amia Srinivasan, “Stop the Robot Apocalypse”
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- *Recommended Reading:* Gideon Lewis-Kraus, “The Reluctant Prophet of Effective Altruism”
 - *Further Reading:* Alice Crary, “Against Effective Altruism”
 - **essay 1 due by 11:59pm**

Class 8 (08/17)

Kant I: Introduction to Kant.

- Onora O’Neil, “A Kantian Approach to Famine Relief”
- **essay 2 assigned**

Class 9 (08/19)

Kant II: Morality and the good will.

- Immanuel Kant, *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (selections)
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- *Recommended Reading:* Pamela Hieronymi, “Kant in Three Pages”
 - *Further Reading:* Barbara Herman, “On the Value of Acting from the Motive of Duty”

Week 4 | Catch-Up, and Skeptical Perspectives on Morality

Class 10 (08/22)

- Catch-up Day
- Catch up on any reading you're behind on!

Class 11 (08/24)

Genealogical critique.

- Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Preface and Essay 1 (selections)
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- *Recommended Listening:* [Amia Srinivasan on Genealogy, *Philosophy Bites* podcast episode](#)

Class 12 (08/26)

Morality as “ideology.”

- Karl Marx, *The German Ideology* (selections)
 - [Alex Mayyasi, “Of Money and Morals”](#)
 - [Carl Cederström, “The Dangers of Happiness”](#)
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- *Recommended Reading:* Simon Blackburn, “False Consciousness”
 - *Further Reading:* Tommie Shelby, “Ideology, Racism, and Critical Social Theory”
 - *Further Reading:* Charles Mills, “Marxism, 'Ideology' and Moral Objectivism”
 - **essay 2 due by 11:59pm**
 - **essay 3 assigned**

Week 5 | Ethics and Economics: the Morality of the Market

Class 13 (08/29)

Is the market moral?

- Friedrich Hayek, “The Use of Knowledge in Society”
- Allan Gibbard, “What’s Morally Special About Free Exchange?”

Class 14 (08/31)

Moral problems with efficiency?

- Barry Maguire, “Efficient Markets and Alienation”
- Allen Buchanan, selections from *Ethics, Efficiency, and the Market*

Week 6 | Oppression

Class 15 (09/02)

Oppression as a topic for ethics.

- Marilyn Frye, “Oppression”
 - Iris Marion Young, “The Five Faces of Oppression” (excerpted)
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- *Further Reading:* Tommie Shelby, “Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto”

(09/05 — Labor Day: no class)

Class 16 (09/07)

Ethics according to Simone de Beauvoir.

- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (selections)
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- Recommended Watching: [Simone de Beauvoir “Why I’m a Feminist”](#)
 - *Further Reading:* Iris Murdoch, “The Idea of Perfection”

Class 17 (09/09)

- Open Day: we will vote on how we want to spend this final lecture.
- **essay 3 due by 11:59pm**