

PHIL 2500: Ethics Syllabus

Course Information

Zoom option for class meetings

This is an in-person class, and I plan to be physically in the classroom for each session. If able to do so, students should try to attend in person as well. However, if, for any reason, it would be difficult for a student to attend a given session in person, they are welcome to attend via Zoom (with video turned on). In order to do so, they must email Professor at least one hour prior to the start of class. There is no cap to the number of sessions a student can attend via Zoom; just try to attend in person when possible. Students attending via Zoom will have the same participation responsibilities as other students. Alternatively, students are welcome to just listen in (and watch) to a session via Zoom (prior notice still required) with video off, but attendance credit will not be received. I will do my best to make the quality of instruction for Zoom students meet the same standards as those attending in person, but please know there may be technical issues and challenges to teaching simultaneously in both an in-person and virtual environment.

Credit Hours

This is a three-credit-hour course. This course meets the Course Credit Hours Expectation outlined in the Course Catalog. Generally, each student should expect, on average, to spend six hours each week outside of class completing work for this course.

Course Learning Outcomes

upon completion of this course, students will have acquired

- an appreciation for the major philosophical traditions of ethics
- an aptitude for assessing moral situations from normative frameworks
- a recognition of the applicability of ethical theory to contemporary issues
- a refined set of tools for notetaking and web-making
- an appreciation for participation-based instructional methods

Course Description (from the catalog)

Study of the major schools of ethical theory through reading major thinkers and their contemporary commentators. Examination of selected theoretical and practical problems in contemporary ethics.

Course Description (particular to sections)

This course is intended to introduce the major ethical works and debates in the history of Western philosophy as well as their application to contemporary moral issues. The major theoretical focus will be on normative ethics, including deontology, utilitarianism and a survey of other competing accounts. Class discussion will focus on elucidating the principles, distinctions, historical foundations, and application of these ethical theories. Class discussion will also focus on distinguishing those theories from meta-ethical challenges, including egoism, relativism, determinism and divine command theory. Contemporary moral issues to be considered will be based on small group selection of topics, including: world hunger, animal welfare, climate change, structural racism, artificial intelligence, and corporate social responsibility. Attentive reading and quality contributions to discussion will be expected.

Required Texts and materials

- All texts provided online via Blackboard (located at BB/ Content/ Course Content/ Assigned Texts). Please read in advance and bring texts to class when relevant.
- Please bring a notebook for our course to class each day; this should be opened and dated by the start of each class session.

Student/Instructor Mutual Reading Pledge

pledges to do his best to make sure the assigned readings are of manageable length. In return, he asks students to pledge to complete all the readings on time, which means taking all necessary steps to ensure they have firm understandings of the content.

Policy on Student Use of Technological Devices in the Classroom

Students may request permission to use devices in class for class-related purposes such as note taking and consultation of electronic versions of assigned texts. However, as it is important that a cohesive classroom environment be maintained, students using devices in class must make extra effort (via eye contact and active participation) to demonstrate they are attuned to class discussion.

Instructional Methods and Evaluation of Performance

The weighted value of each assignment is as follows and, in total, they add up to 100 possible points for the course:

- **Major Assignment #1: Metaethics: 20 percent**
- **Major Assignment #2: Normative Ethics: 30 percent**
- **Major Assignment #3: Applied Ethics Presentations: 10 percent**
- **Text Sets: 25 percent**
- **Weekly Attendance and Participation: 15 percent**

The following is a more detailed overview of each of the major instructional methods and evaluation of performance in the course. For each of the essays listed below, a handout will be provided in advance for the due date. Do carefully note that plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated; when in doubt, cite.

Late papers: notes regarding "major assignments" 1 & 2:

- Late papers, without advance correspondence, are subject to an immediate 10% score deduction. There is a grace period (of a few hours) for cases of technical difficulties and other unforeseeable circumstances as long as the student follows up as soon as possible. Short deadline extensions (of a few days) will be granted for any student related to any paper assignment in cases where the student communicates with Professor prior to the deadline and remains in regular communication.
- If a late analysis paper is not turned in by the start of the following class session, Professor will work with the student to arrange an in-person 60-minute make-up session in which the student will complete the assignment in a closed-book, closed-note format with an additional deduction of 15%. Any required make-up assignment must be completed within two class periods or ten calendar days (whichever comes first) of the original due date.

- **Major Assignment #1: Metaethics: 20 percent**

At the end of the first unit of the course, students will complete and submit an out-of-class essay response explaining how the major meta-ethical challenges (e.g. divine command, relativism, egoism, ~~determinism~~), if theoretically sound, would problematize normative ethical inquiry; students should also provide the best arguments provided in our course texts against these metaethical challenges. Each student's response should incorporate multiple quotations from all relevant assigned readings (including page numbers and a two-part paraphrase, as will be discussed).

- **Major Assignment #2: Normative Ethics: 30 percent**

At the end of the second unit of the course, students will complete and submit a longer out-of-class essay explaining how the major normative ethical theories (utilitarianism, deontology and a third theory) could be used to assess a given scenario; students should also critique those competing normative theories, in terms of the quality of the guidance they give as to what ought to be done in the scenario under consideration. Each student's response should incorporate multiple quotations from all relevant assigned

readings (including page numbers and a two-part paraphrase, as will be discussed).

- **Major Assignment #3: Applied Ethics Presentations: 10 percent**

At the start of the third (and final) unit of the course, students will be placed into one of four groups based on submitted topic preferences. Groups will be focused on the following possible applied ethics topics: 1) our moral obligations to non-humans, 2) our obligations to those in desperate need (e.g. famine), 3) our obligations to future generations with regard to global climate change, 4) our obligations regarding a historic system of structural racism, 5) responsible use of AI within academic coursework and assessment, 6) and corporate social responsibility. Student groups will develop presentations on the assigned topics, incorporating two fictional characters (created by the instructor) relevant to the topic. Each student group's presentation should incorporate multiple references from all assigned readings associated with their assigned topic as well as their own assigned research on additional scholarly articles and encyclopedia entries. Individual student scores will be assessed based on provided Applied Ethics Journal submissions where students will inform the instructor about their individual contributions to their group during each of the planning sessions as well as on the quality of the group's final presentations (where each group making a good-faith effort and meeting the basic content and time requirements will receive an "A range" score). Any student absent from the presentations session (during the required final examination period) will need to complete a make-up dialogue paper (1500 word minimum) due within three calendar days of the absence.

- **Text Sets: 25 percent**

For each of the eight "text sets" listed on the schedule, students will produce margin notes or a concept map, or will complete a worksheet, or will take an in-class quiz. These activities will be due at the beginning of the first class on which the related reading is assigned (unless otherwise noted on the schedule). Late submissions will not be accepted. For each student, the five best text set scores will count for a total of five points each (the lowest three scores will be dropped); thus, in total there are 25 possible points for this component. Sample margin notes and concept maps will be supplied in advance. It is an expectation that note taking and analytical skills will improve as the semester progresses; thus, later submissions will be subject to higher standards.

- **Weekly Attendance and Participation: 15 percent**

There are fifteen regular weeks of the course. Students can earn up to one point per week for attending and making substantive contributions to discussion. Typically, substantive contribution can be achieved by sharing at least once per-week during in-class discussion, such as offering prepared responses to the relevant "reflect" questions on the schedule. The "Reflect" questions are based on assigned readings and lecture content. Typically, .25 is deducted for each daily absence and an additional .2 is deducted for poor weekly participation.

Here is further information regarding attendance:

- If a student must miss a class, they may complete and submit a journal response (less than one page) to a prompt. The prompt for each class is the "Reflect" question listed for that class session on the course schedule. Responses must be submitted via the Dropbox for Text Sets and Absence Journals within one week of the absence in order to make up for half of the absence; the absence date must be included in the response. Each tardy will be considered half an absence.
- In borderline cases between two final course grades (e.g. 89%), students who miss two or fewer classes and have active participation records in class will have their final class score rounded up by as much as 1% (2% if excellent).

Strategies for Formative Assessment

In the middle of the semester, students will be asked to complete a formative assessment in which students can reflect upon how the course is going and provide feedback. This will be completed via a quick survey ("what's going well? what's not going well?") via Blackboard. These reflections will be anonymous and are intended to enable the instructor to better guide students through the learning process for the rest of the semester.

Evaluation Methods

Students will receive a weighted score for each major assignment at least one-week prior to the due date for the next major assignment of the course. Students will receive their scores on Weekly Attendance and Participation and the end of each week or by the middle of the following week. Text set scores will be returned within two weeks of being submitted. These weighted scores will be posted via Gradebook on the Blackboard course site. If a return date listed above is not met for a particular assignment, Professor will email the class with an explanation and an updated date. Students are expected to monitor their own grades on Blackboard and save all graded work. Grading rubrics for the major assignments will be included via handouts on Blackboard by the start of the associated units; expectations for text sets (e.g. margin notes and concept maps) will be given during class.

Determination of Grades

Final grades will be reported using the following scale:

92-100%	A	80-82%	B-	68-70%	D+
90-92%	A-	78-80%	C+	62-68%	D
88-90%	B+	72-78%	C	60-62%	D-
82-88%	B	70-72%	C-	< 60%	F

Other Important Course Information

Respecting Diverse Views:

In our meetings together we will greatly benefit from our different perspectives and ideas as well as from our own different backgrounds and experiences. This is particularly the case as we will be focusing on philosophical and religious ideas in our course. It is expected that everyone will be included and be treated with respect.

Professional Email Standards

When emailing Professor, I ask that you use a professional email model. The professional email model includes use of a subject, a greeting line, and a signature. If you are unsure of whether the person you are addressing will know which course you are in without having to look it up, you should provide the course name and section number as well.

Also, keep in mind that Professor typically has over 100 students each semester. Before emailing, depending on the issue, try to find the answer yourself or ask a peer. At that point, of course Professor is very happy to help (I really want you to succeed!). But make sure you write a careful email to make it as easy as possible to respond.

If Professor emails you, he expects a response within two business days; Professor holds to the same standard for responding to students.

Also, during any online interactions associated with this class, please remember to present yourself in a professional manner, such as you plan to do at your job after you begin your career following graduation. Visit [this website](#) for Netiquette tips.

Important UNI Policies:

There are other important UNI Policies related to this course. Please review these using the "Syllabus Statements" folder on our course's Blackboard site (location: Blackboard/

Content/ Panther Resources / Syllabus Statements).