

Introduction to Ethics

Syllabus (v1)

Course Info

Course Name & Number: Intro to Ethics (01:730:107, Section 01)

Instructor: Richard Fry, richard.fry@rutgers.edu

Meeting Time: T/R, 8:45-10:05, Ruth Adam Building, Rm. 104 (Cook/Douglass)

Office Hours: T/R 2:00-3:00, 7:30-8:30PM, *location tbd*.

Course Website: available through <https://canvas.rutgers.edu>

Course Description

Ethics asks us to consider what we ought to do and how we know. In this course, we will use a number of different applied ethical problems to jump-start our thinking about what ethical principles and positions matter in the world around us. We'll then go on to examine systems of ethics that purport to tell us what's right and wrong, good and bad, and why. You will be assessed primarily through written papers. No antecedent familiarity with philosophy is required or expected.

Course Goals

- Core curriculum learning goals met by this course:
 - (AHo) Students will be able to examine critically philosophical and other theoretical issues concerning the nature of reality, human experience, knowledge, value, and/or cultural production.
- Departmental learning goals met by this course:
 - Develop the ability to accurately and fairly present others' views.
 - Improve your analytical reading and writing skills.
 - Improve your ability to analyze, evaluate, and construct arguments.
- Other learning goals for this course:
 - Use philosophical texts to introduce you to important ethical problems and systems.
 - Cultivate your own thinking about central problems in ethics, especially as those issues bear on your own life.
 - Develop essential life skills such as time management, communication when encountering difficulties, and thoughtful engagement with others.

Required Texts

- All course readings will be made available through Canvas.
 - You are required to bring these readings to class.

Academic Misconduct and Plagiarism

- You are expected and required to uphold standards of academic honesty.
- Plagiarism of ideas or words is unacceptable.
- Confirmed academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course.
- Familiarize yourself plagiarism is and academic dishonesty and Rutgers's policies:
 - <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>,
 - https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism
 - <https://wp.rutgers.edu/academics/undergraduate/plagiarism>

Personal Conduct

- You are responsible for treating your classmates with respect and courtesy.
 - In addition to the norms outlined below, it also means arriving on time and being prepared.
- Students are expected to attend all classes
 - If you expect to miss one or two classes, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence. This system will automatically email me.
- *You are responsible for helping to foster a safe and productive learning environment.*
 - Some of the topics we will address this semester can provoke powerful emotions, so be mindful of how topics under discussion may differently impact members of the class.
 - This course adheres to the Philosophy Departments policy on norms of discourse: <https://philosophy.rutgers.edu/about-us/discourse>
- Laptops, Tablets and Phones:
 - *tbd.*

Accommodations

- Students needing accommodations should follow the procedures available at <https://ods.rutgers.edu>

Grades

- **LATE WORK:** For each 24 hours late after the due date for a piece of written work is submitted, 3% will be subtracted from whatever grade it earns.
 - All work more than a week late will receive no more than 70%.
- **EXTENSIONS:** If you need an extension for written work, email me with a brief description of your situation.
 - *If I approve an extension, we will work out an appropriate timeframe.*
 - Extensions must be requested at least 24 hours before the assignment is due.
- **ANONYMOUS GRADING:** The papers for this course will be graded anonymously.
 - Work submitted through Canvas should *not* have your name in the text or the filename.
 - Failure to properly anonymize your submission will result in a 10% penalty to your grade.

- **GRADE APPEALS:** If you believe your work deserves a different grade than it received, you may ask *in writing* for reconsideration.
 - Submit this request *within one week* but no sooner than *one day after* your work is returned to you.
 - Your written request must explain *why* you believe the work deserves a different grade.
 - Please note that if a change is made, the new grade may be either higher or lower.

Changes

- I reserve the right to change any part of this syllabus at any time.
- Changes will be announced in class and a new version of the syllabus posted to Canvas.

Assignments and Assessment

More details about these assignments will be distributed online and in class throughout the semester.

Three Short Papers - 25% ea.

- Three short (800-1200) word papers
- Each of these papers will address a different question
 - Paper 1: Argue that some (moral) feature of makes an applied ethical issue important
 - Paper 2: Outline what you take to be the best case for a particular moral theory
 - Paper 3: Make a case that a particular moral theory best addresses one of the applied ethical issues we discussed
- These papers will be due **October 22nd**, **November 22nd**, and **December 10th**.

Weekly Reflections - 25%

- Each week you will turn in a short (200-400 word) reflection paper
- These papers will have three, numbered parts:
 - (1) Reconstructing an argument based on what we discussed in class the previous class period (100-200 words)
 - (2) Addressing the readings we will be talking about later that day (100-200 words)
 - (3) Asking an explicit question about the material
- The worst two of these will not count toward your final grade
- These papers will be due **each Thursday** by 5:00PM, starting September 12th

Course Calendar

with Topics, Readings and Assignments

*Read the material listed before the class-day listed.
Bring the material listed for a day to class that day.*

0: Introductions: What's going on here?

03 Sep - Intro to the Course

Read: ScienceDaily, "The Mere Presence of your Smartphone Reduces your Brainpower"

Read: May, "Students are Better Off without a Laptop in the Classroom"

Read: Mills, "Against Laptops & Phones in Class"

Read: Pryal and Jack, "When You Talk About Banning Laptops, You Throw Disabled Students Under the Bus"

Watch: University of Auckland, "How to Evaluate an Argument"

Read: Fry, "How to Evaluate an Argument"

1: Challenges to Ethics

05 Sep - Relativism

Read: Rachels, "Morality is Not Relative"

10 Sep - Egoism

Read: Pojman, "Why Should I Be Moral?"

12 Sep - Nihilism/Skepticism

Read: Mackie, "A Refutation of Morals"

2: Applied Ethical Issues

2A: Getting Started

17 Sep - Human Enhancement

Read: Savulescu, "A Doping Manifesto"

19 Sep - Animals

Read: Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases"

2B: Poverty and Population

24 Sep - Charity

Read: Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"

26 Sep - Obligations

Read: Harden, "Lifeboat Ethics"

01 October - Climate Change

Read: Ludden, "Should We Be Having Kids In The Age Of Climate Change?"

Read: Carrington, "Want to Fight Climate Change? Have Fewer Children"

03 Oct - Reproductive Justice

Read: Foreign Policy, "As Environmental Catastrophe Looms, is it Ethical to Have Children?"

Read: Woodward, "Climate Change 'Birthstrikers' Refuse to have Children"

2C: Social Engineering and Privacy

08 Oct - Social Engineering and Privacy: Social Credit

Read: Botsman, "Big Brother Meets Big Data as China Moves to Rate its Citizens"

Read: Chun, "China's New Frontiers in Dystopian Tech"

Read: O'Kane, "China will ban people with poor 'social credit' from planes and trains"

Read: van't Klooster, "Rewarding Virtuous Citizens"

10 Oct - Social Engineering and Privacy: Personal Privacy

Read: Newman, "Hackers Release Ashley Madison User Data"

Read: Herman, "Early Notes on the Ashley Madison Hack"

Read: DailyNous, "Philosophers on the Ashley Madison Hack"

Read: Vanity Fair, "Jennifer Lawrence Calls Photo Hacking a 'Sex Crime'"

In Class Watch: The Office s2e09, "Email Surveillance"

15 Oct - Social Engineering and Privacy: Governmental Surveillance

Read: Solove, “‘I’ve Got Nothing to Hide’ and Other Misunderstandings of Privacy”

Read: Stoycheff, “‘Mass Surveillance Chills Online Speech Even When People Have ‘Nothing to Hide’”

17 Oct - Social Engineering and Privacy: Surveillance Tools

Read: Goldstein, “‘Nothing Kept me up at Night the Way the Gorgon Stare did’”

Read: Kaplan, “‘Cheap, Automatic License Plate Readers are Creeping into American Neighborhoods’”

22 Oct - Social Engineering and Privacy: State Abuse

Watch: Vox, “‘China’s Secret Internment Camps’”

Read: Rajagopalan, “‘This is What a 21st-Century Police State Really Looks Like’”

Short Paper #1 due by 11:59PM (midnight)

3: Moral Theories

24 Oct - Introduction to Morals

No new reading. But before class, reflect on what general things we can say about what makes an action right or wrong, why, and how you know.

In Class Watch: Black Mirror s3e1, “Nosedive”

29 Oct - Deontology

Read: Fieser, “‘The Categorical Imperative’” (*excerpt*)

Read: Rachels and Rachels, “‘Kant and Respect for Persons’” (*excerpt*)

31 Oct - Deontology

Read: Kant, *Grounds of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ch.1

Watch: BBC4, “‘Kant’s Axe’”

In Class Watch: Frasier, s4e10, “‘Liar! Liar!’” (*excerpt*)

05 November - Consequentialism

Read: Timmons, “‘Utilitarianism’” (Ch. 5, §1-4)

Watch: Wireless Philosophy, “‘Utilitarianism, Part 1’”

In Class Watch: The Good Place s1e5, “‘Category 55 Emergency Doomsday Crisis’” (*excerpt*)

07 November - Consequentialism

Rachels and Rachels, "The Debate Over Utilitarianism"

Hooker, "The Demandingness Objection" (*excerpt*)

Williams, *For and Against Utilitarianism* (*excerpt*)

In Class Watch: Gross (Le Guin), "The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas, a film adaptation"

12 Nov - Virtue Ethics

Watch: BBC4, "Aristotle on Flourishing"

Read: Timmons, "Virtue Ethics"

Read: Rachels and Rachels, "What are the Virtues?"

14 Nov - Narrative Ethics

Read: McCarthy, "Principlism or Narrative Ethics?"

19 Nov - Sentimentalism

Read: Broadie, "Smith on the Moral Sentiments" (SEP)

21 Nov - Moral Dilemmas

Read: McConnell, "Moral Dilemmas" §1-3 (SEP)

In Class Watch: *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* s6e19, "In the Pale Moon Light"

Short Paper #2 due by 11:59PM (midnight)

4: Applying Theories

26 Nov - Meetings about the Final Paper (optional)

Get in touch with me the week before Thanksgiving if you'd like to schedule a meeting to talk about your final paper. I can help pick topics and workshop ideas, but also give feedback on outlines, both by email and in person.

03 December - Laptops, Enhancement, Animals

05 Dec - Poverty, Population, and Privacy

No new reading, but think about how to apply the theories we've looked at to the applied ethical issues we've discussed.

10 Dec - Review and Open Question Time

No new reading, but think about the structure, content and assignments of the course. We'll have time to discuss any remaining philosophical issues, your feelings about the course and then there will be time for you to ask me any questions—at all!—that you might have.

Short Paper #3 due by 11:59PM (midnight)

Resources

Philosophical Resources

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://plato.stanford.edu>

Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://www.iep.utm.edu>

Tips on Writing a Philosophy Paper

<http://goo.gl/iDzgFb>

Academic Resources

Disability Services (ODS)

<https://ods.rutgers.edu>

(848) 445-6800

Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway

The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates and coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources.

Academic Support

<https://newbrunswick.rutgers.edu/academics/academic-support>

This site has links to help you find your academic advising office, understand degree requirements and your progress toward them, and links to services to help you succeed, like:

Writing Centers (<https://wp.rutgers.edu/writingcenters/writingcenters>)

Learning Centers (<https://rlc.rutgers.edu>)

Program in American Language Studies, for non-native English speakers (<https://pals.rutgers.edu>)

RU1st, for first-generation, underrepresented, and low-income students (<https://diversity.rutgers.edu/ru1st>)

Library Tutorials

<https://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/tutorials>

The library has a number of helpful tutorials to get you started with searching, understanding the difference between scholarly and popular literature, and avoiding plagiarism. Check them out!

Student-Wellness Services

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

<http://rhscaps.rutgers.edu/>

(848) 932-7884

17 Senior Street, New Brunswick

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

<http://vpva.rutgers.edu>

(848) 932-1181

3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Scarlet Listeners

<http://www.scarletlisteners.com>

(732) 247-5555

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.

“Just In Case” Web App

<http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.