Philosophy 107.2: Introduction to Ethics

Instructor: Aaron Rabinowitz

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**1. Course Location and Meeting Times:**  
  
Monday/Thursdays 11:30am-12:50pm CA-A5  
Office Hours: Monday/ Wednesday 1:40-2:40pm in Miller 212  
Online Office Hours: By Appointment

**2. Course Description:**

In this course, we will discuss the field of ethics on three key levels: applied, normative, and metaethics. Our goal is to understand the significance of ethical thinking in our daily lives. We will survey the major normative ethical theories, and will discuss key problems concerning the nature of ethics. We will then apply these theories to topics like affirmative action, gun control, and pornography. This class will help prepare you to face daily ethical challenges and hopefully will help you pursue a life you find fulfilling. It will also teach you to better analyze and defend your own ethical views.

**3. Course Materials and Assignments:**

*Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology* by Steven M. Cahn Oxford University Press 4th edition

**All readings with page numbers listed are from this book.**

All other materials will be made available through the canvas site.

**4. Core Curriculum Information:**

This course meets the Aho (Area of Inquiry: Arts and Humanities) requirement.

**5. Class Schedule:**

| **Date** | **Topic** | **Reading** | **Homework** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **9/5** | First Meeting | Read Syllabus |  |
| **9/9** | The Importance of Ethics | Letter from a Birmingham Jail by MLK Jr. pg. 27 | Forum Topic 1: Select a passage from Birmingham Jail that reflects an ethical principle you’re sympathetic to and explain why the principle appeals to you. (due 9/13) |
| **9/12** | Normative Ethics: Utilitarianism | Utilitarianism by Mill pg. 118 |  |
| **9/16** | Applied Ethics: Utilitarianism | All Animals are Equal by Singer (Canvas) | Forum Topic 2: Do you find Singer's argument compelling? Why or why not? (due 9/20) |
| **9/19** | Normative Ethics: Deontology | A Simplified Account of Kant's Ethics by O’Neill pg. 114  The Categorial Imperative by Kant pg. 102 |  |
| **9/23** | Applied Ethics: Deontology | Why Abortion is Immoral by Marquis pg. 223 | Forum Topic 3: Come up with a situation where you think Deontology gives the wrong answer, and one where you think it gives the right answer. (due 9/27) |
| **9/26** | Normative Ethics: Virtue Theory | The Nature of Virtue by Aristotle pg. 139 |  |
| **9/30** | Applied Ethics: Virtue Theory | Meaning of Life by Wolf pg. 485 |  |
| **10/3** | Normative Ethics: The Ethics of Care | The Ethics of Care by Held pg. 148 | **FIRST PAPER DUE AT 11:59PM** |
| **10/7** | Applied Ethics: Ethics of Care | Ethical care at the end of life (Canvas) | Forum Topic 4: Describe a case where you prefer care ethics to more traditional ethical systems and why. (due 10/11) |
| **10/10** | Metaethics: Is Morality Real? | How Not to Answer Moral Questions Regan pg. 45  God and Morality Cahn pg. 50 |  |
| **10/14** | Metaethics: Why Be Moral? | Right and Wrong by Nagel pg. 67  Egoism and Moral Skepticism by Rachels pg. 71 | Forum Topic 5: Do you believe humans construct or discover morality and why? (due 10/18) |
| **10/17** | Moral Psychology: Moral Foundations Theory | Happiness and Immorality by Cahn and Murphy pg. 83  Moral Foundations Theory (Canvas) | **MIDTERM DUE AT 11:59PM** |
| **10/21** | Metaethics: The is/ought divide | Hume’s Moral Philosophy (Sections 1-6) <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/hume-moral/#pred> | Forum Topic 6: Which moral foundations did you favor, according to the test? Does that feel accurate to you? (due 10/25) |
| **10/24** | Normative/Metaethics: Ethical Constructivism | The Social Contract by Hobbes pg. 154  A Theory of Justice by Rawls pg. 162 |  |
| **10/28** | Metaethics: Moral Luck | Moral Luck by Nagel (Canvas) | Forum Topic 7: Do you believe we should ever use any form of Affirmative Action? Why or why not? (due 11/1) |
| **10/31** | Applied Ethics: Affirmative Action | Two Conceptions of Affirmative Action by Cahn pg. 421  Facing Facts and Responsibilities by Hanson pg. 432 |  |
| **11/4** | Applied Ethics: Immigration | <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/immigration/> | Forum Topic 8: Do states have a moral obligation to take in immigrants? Why or why not? (due 11/8) |
| **11/7** | Normative Ethics: On Liberty | Mill On Liberty (Canvas) |  |
| **11/11** | Applied Ethics: Pornography | Pornography, Oppression, and Freedom by Longino pg. 339  The Case Against Pornography: An assessment by Feinberg pg. 352 | Forum Topic 9: Do you think objectifying pornography should be restricted? (due 11/15) |
| **11/14** | Applied Ethics Debate: Free Speech |  |  |
| **11/18** | Applied Ethics: Gun Control | Gun Control by LaFollette (Canvas) | **SECOND PAPER DUE AT 11:55PM**  Forum Topic 10: What argument for or against gun control do you find most compelling, and what follows from it? (due 11/22) |
| **11/21** | Applied Ethics Debate: Gun Control |  |  |
| **11/25** | Applied Ethics: Business Ethics | <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ethics-business/> (1-6) | Forum Topic 11: Which form of emergent technology do you think presents challenging new ethical conundrums? (due 11/29) |
| **11/26** | Applied Ethics: Bioethics | <https://www.iep.utm.edu/bioethic/> |  |
|  | Thanksgiving Nov 27-Dec 1st |  |  |
| **12/2** | Normative Ethics: Trolley Problems | The Trolley Problem by Thomson pg. 446  Turning the Trolley by Thomson pg. 449 | Forum Topic 12: Concoct a version of the trolley problem which highlights an interesting ethical principle. (due 12/6) |
| **12/5** | Normative Ethics: Death | Death by Nagel pg. 453 |  |
| **12/9** | Normative Ethics: Moral Saints | Moral Saints by Wolf pg. 173 | Forum Topic 13: Have your views on morality changed over the course of this class? (due 10/13) |
|  |  |  | **FINAL EXAM IS DUE** |

**6. Grading and Assignments:**

**A. Quizzes (10%)**

There will be a short quiz posted on Canvas related to each reading due by 9am on the day the reading is assigned. The quizzes are meant to be completed alongside the reading to make sure you are getting through the material.

**B. Discussion Responses (10%)**

Each week I will post a discussion prompt related to that week’s topic. You will have until the end of the day on Friday to post a 100-200 word response to the prompt. The goal is to make sure you are absorbing and retaining the material.

**C. First Paper (20%)**

You will write a 1,000-1,300 word argumentative paper on one of the topics we cover in class. If you want to write on something we haven’t covered yet, please see me for approval. I will provide a list of potential topics as well as a grading rubric that explains the desired structure for the paper, and a sample essay. Papers will be submitted online through Canvas. Late papers will receive 2 points off (out of 40) for every day that they are late.

**D. Second Paper (20%)**

You will write a 1,300-1,600 word argumentative paper on one of the topics we cover in class. If you want to write on something we haven’t covered yet, please see me for approval. I will provide a list of potential topics as well as a grading rubric that explains the desired structure for the paper, and a sample essay. It is expected that the quality of your writing will improve based on feedback from the first paper. Papers will be submitted online through Canvas. Late papers will receive 2 points off (out of 40) for every day that they are late.

**E. Midterm (20%)**

There will be a take home, open notes midterm posted on Canvas covering topics from the first half of the class. It will contain 15 multiple choice questions.

**F. Final Exam (20%)**

There will be a take home, open notes final posted on Canvas covering primarily topics from the second half of the course, though you will be expected to retain key ideas from the first half. It will contain 15 multiple choice questions.

**Late Work Policy:** If you don’t submit an assignment on time, you will not be able to submit it late unless you have an appropriate excuse and the relevant documentation.

Your letter grade will be determined by the following grading scale:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A | B+ | B | C+ | C | D | F |
| 100%-90% | 89%-87% | 86%-80% | 79%-77% | 76%-70% | 69%-60% | 59%-0% |

**7. Canvas Site:**

Some reading materials and important information, including your grades, will be available on the site. You can check Canvas for this information, and an email will be sent to you when any information is added to the site. Emails sent through Canvas will be sent to your Rutgers email address. So, if you do not check the Canvas site regularly and primarily use another email aside from your Rutgers one, you should set up the email that you primarily use so that messages sent from Canvas to your Rutgers email account can be forwarded to your primary email address.

**8. Attendance Policy:**

Students are expected to attend all classes. Attendance will be taken each class. For every unexcused absences beyond the first two (free passes) you will lose one point off your final grade. If you require an excused absence beyond the first two, you will need to provide me a copy of the excused absence form on Canvas as well as documentation of some sort.

My policy for missed classes is that students who miss classes are responsible for finding out **from other students** what they missed.

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. An email is automatically sent to me.

**9. Behavior Policy:**

Please note that none of the following disruptive activities are permitted:

1. Engaging in private conversations during lecture components of the class;
2. Using cell phones or laptops in class; or
3. Engaging in discussions unrelated to the course during group work time.
4. Packing up early

If you cannot adhere to this code of conduct on a particular day, please don’t attend class on that day. If you repeatedly disrupt class, I will ask you to leave.

A note on in class discussion:

Productive intellectual inquiry – the basic purpose of colleges and universities – requires respectful, constructive discussion that enables all parties to participate fully. Philosophy has an especially vital role to play in facilitating such inquiry, because philosophers have been developing and honing practices of critical discussion over many centuries: techniques for uncovering, justifying, and assessing assumptions lurking behind any claim, from the most obvious to the most controversial.

Philosophy is thus a valuable tool for self-reflection and for communal debate. This is especially true at a time when so much is being debated, in such heated terms. But like any tool, in order to work, it must be used well. In our community we expect all participants to observe basic norms of civility and respect. This means stating your own views directly and substantively: focusing on reasons, assumptions and consequences rather than on who is offering them, or how. And it means engaging other’s views in the same terms. No topic or claim is too obvious or controversial to be discussed; but claims and opinions have a place in the discussion only when they are presented in a respectful, collegial, and constructive way.

**10. Policy on Cheating:**

Anyone caught cheating in any way, or aiding anyone else in cheating, will receive an automatic F for the course and be referred to the appropriate authorities for further measures to be taken. These further measures may include suspension or expulsion.

Rutgers Academic Integrity Informatin: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/>

Tutorial about plagiarism: <http://library.camden.rutgers.edu/EducationalModules/Plagiarism/>

**11. Student-Wellness Services:**

[Just In Case Web App](http://m.appcreatorpro.com/m/rutgers/fda9f59ca5/fda9f59ca5.html)

<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.

**Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)**

**(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/** [www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/](http://www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/)

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)**

**(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 /** [www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/)

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.

**Disability Services**

(**848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 /** <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’s disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

**Scarlet Listeners**

**(732) 247-5555 /** <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>

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