

Philosophy 107: Introduction to Ethics

Instructor: Aaron Rabinowitz

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1. Course Location and Meeting Times:

1.730.107.01 Monday/Wednesday 1:40pm-3:00pm in Beck Hall 251

Office Hours: Wednesdays: 9:30-10:30am in Philosophy department room 540

Thursdays: 1-2pm Miller Hall 211-212

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 most significant ethical theories, and will debate key issues in metaethics. We will then apply these theories to topics like animal rights, euthanasia, and pornography. This class will help prepare you to face ethical challenges no matter the life you pursue, and hopefully will help you pursue the life you find fulfilling.

3. Course Materials and Assignments:

Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology by Steven M. Cahn Oxford University Press

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

4. Core Curriculum Information:

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

5. Class Schedule:

Date	Topic	Reading	Homework
1/17	First Meeting	Read Syllabus	
1/22	The Importance of Ethics	Letter from a Birmingham Jail pg. 27	Select some passages that reflect an ethical principle you're sympathetic to and explain what the principle is.
1/24	Normative Ethics: Utilitarianism	Utilitarianism pg. 118	Come up with a situation where you think Utilitarianism gives the wrong answer.
1/29	Applied Ethics: Utilitarianism	Famine, Affluence, and Morality pg. 264	Do you find Singer's argument compelling? Why or why not?
1/31	Normative Ethics: Deontology	The Categorical Imperative pg. 102	Come up with a situation where you think Deontology gives the wrong answer.
2/5	Applied Ethics: Deontology	Why Abortion is Immoral pg. 223	Do you find Marquis's argument compelling? Why or why not?
2/7	Normative Ethics: Virtue Theory	The Nature of Virtue pg. 139	Is virtue theory a distinct ethical view from the one's we've looked at?
2/12	Applied Ethics: Virtue Theory	Meaning of Life pg. 486	Do you find Wolfe's argument compelling? Why or why not?

Date	Topic	Reading	Homework
2/14	Normative Ethics: The Ethics of Care	The Ethics of Care pg. 148	Give an example where you believe care ethics is valuable. FIRST PAPER DUE
2/19	Applied Ethics: Ethics of Care	The Intentional Termination of a Life pg. 253	Do you find Steinbock's argument compelling? Why or why not?
2/21	Metaethics: Is Morality Real?	How Not to Answer Moral Questions pg. 45	What are your intuitions about the nature of morality? Is it constructed or discovered?
2/26	Metaethics: Why Be Moral?	Right and Wrong pg. 67 Egoism and Moral Skepticism pg. 71	Are you a moral person? What motivates you to be so?
2/28	Metaethics: Happiness and Immorality	Happiness and Immorality pg. 83 Fragmented Values by Nagel	Do you believe a person can be both happy and immoral? MIDTERM EXAM DUE
3/5	Metaethics: The is/ought divide	Hume's Treatise of Human Nature 3.1.1 (on sakai)	Are there any statements that bridge the fact/value divide?
3/7	Metaethics: What is Ethical debate really about?	The Nature of Ethical Disagreement pg. 90 The Rationality of Moral Disagreement pg. 97	Are Ethical disagreements about facts or values or both?

Date	Topic	Reading	Homework
	Spring Break March 10th-18th		
3/19	Metaethics: Ethical Constructivism	The Social Contract pg. 154 A Theory of Justice pg. 162	What Principles would you accept from the original position?
3/21	Metaethics: Moral Luck	Moral Luck (PDF on Sakai)	Name one behavior you believe you engage in freely. Explain why you engage in that behavior.
3/26	Metaethics: Biases in Ethical Reasoning	Gender Bias	In what ways can you imagine gender or other factors biasing ethical reasoning?
3/28	Applied Ethics: Terrorism	Terrorism pg. 280	What essential feature of Terrorism seems especially problematic to you?
4/2	Applied Ethics: Terrorism	Is Terrorism Distinctively Wrong? Pg. 289	Can you imagine a scenario where terrorism would seem justified?
4/4	Applied Ethics: Pornography	Pornography, Oppression, and Freedom pg. 339	Do we have a right to pornography? SECOND PAPER DUE
4/9	Applied Ethics: Pornography	The Case Against Pornography: An assessment pg. 352	Do we downplay the harms of pornography?

Date	Topic	Reading	Homework
4/11	Applied Ethics: Animal Right	The Case for Animal Rights pg. 360	Is our behavior towards animals really ethically justifiable given what we know about their mental states?
4/16	Applied Ethics: Animal Rights	Why Animals Have No Rights 373	What else follows if we decide that animals should have no rights?
4/18	Normative Ethics: Trolley Problems	The Trolley Problem pg. 446 Turning the Trolley pg. 449	Concoct a version of the trolley problem which highlights an interesting ethical principle.
4/23	Normative Ethics: Death	The Badness of Death pg. 463	How do you feel about death before and after reading this paper?
4/25	Metaethics: Moral Saints	Moral Saints pg. 173	Has your view of moral obligation changed over the course of this class?
4/30	Final Review		
	Final exam is due by Tuesday, May 8th at 3pm		

6. Grading and Assignments:

A. Attendance/Participation (20%)

Ethics is all about what you can argue for. To develop our ethical reasoning skills, we will have in class discussions. Attendance will be recorded each class and will count as half of your participation grade. You are also expected to participate in our sakai community so

that you develop the capacity to discuss issues online, as well as in person. To get full participation, post **ONCE** per week, either an argument/question of your own or a response to someone else's argument/question. These can be based on our current assigned reading or on any ethical issue you're interested in discussing further.

B. First Paper (20%)

You will write one 2-3 page 12 point font double spaced paper arguing for a claim within normative or applied ethics.

C. Second Paper (20%)

You will write one 2-3 page 12 point font double spaced paper arguing for a claim within normative or applied ethics.

D. Exams (40%)

You will have a take home midterm covering topics from the first half of the class, and a take home final exam covering the entire course with an emphasis on material from the second half of the semester.

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. Sakai Site:

Some reading materials and important information, including your grades, will be available on the site. You can check Sakai for this information, and an email will be sent to you when any information is added to the site. Emails sent through Sakai will be sent to your Rutgers email address. So, if you do not check the Sakai 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 Sakai to your Rutgers email account can be forwarded to your primary email address.

The Sakai site can be accessed at:

<https://sakai.rutgers.edu/portal>

8. Attendance Policy:

Students are expected to attend all classes. Absences will likely have a harmful effect on your learning and hence on your final grade.

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

9. Disruptive Behavior:

You are welcome to do as much or as little work as you like in my course, so long as you are mindful of the consequences; but I will not permit any student to disrupt the class environment by distracting me or any other students from our work.

In particular, please note that none of the following disruptive activities are permitted:

- a) Engaging in private conversations during lecture components of the class;
- b) Using cell phones or laptops in class; or
- c) Engaging in discussions unrelated to the course during group work time.

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.

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.