

Syllabus for P. Justin Kalef's Online PHIL 107 (Introduction to Ethics),
Spring 2019

Topic and purpose of course: This course aims to introduce students to the main methods and topics of ethical philosophy. Through taking the course, you will learn to think more precisely, write more clearly, and read more attentively. Along the way, you'll get started thinking about some of the central problems of ethics, and will encounter some major figures in contemporary ethics. You will also learn to avoid the four major blunders of moral thinking.

Method of instruction: While this course is fully online, there are weekly meetings at a scheduled time: 1:00pm to 2:30pm every Tuesday. With a few exceptions, these meetings will take place online. It is important that all students be online during that time each week, as some of the credit for the course is given for work done in those sessions.

The sessions on February 12th and March 12th will be held **on campus** in a room to be determined. The February 12th session will be a test on the technical material covered up to that point in the course, and the March 12th session will be a midterm exam. A proctored online test or midterm will be made available for any students who absolutely cannot come to class on these days, but these will come at some additional expense or inconvenience for those students. If possible, students should make a point of coming to campus on those days.

There will also be an **on-campus** final exam for this course. It will be held, in a room still to be determined, from 9am to 11am on Friday, May 10th.

Required materials: All the readings for this course will all be made available for free to students on our course's Canvas site. However, all students will need to get accounts with Rationale, an argument mapping system. This work will be an essential part of the course from the first week to the last. Setting up accounts with Rationale is a straightforward process and will cost each student a one-time fee of 20 Euros (approximately \$23). I will provide instructions soon on how to set up your account.

Office hours: I will hold office hours from 2:15pm to 4:15pm every Monday in my office, which is Room 547 in the Gateway Building (106 Somerset in New Brunswick, just beside the Barnes and Noble near the train station). I will also consult with students online by appointment, if necessary.

Assessment:

You will have an opportunity to earn up to 1000 points in this course (not counting bonus points, which may in exceptional cases earn students a final total above 1000). This final score, divided by ten, will be your final percentage, and will be converted to a letter grade according to the following scale:

A: 90-100 B+: 85-89 B: 75-84 C+: 70-74 C: 60-70 D: 50-59 F: 0-49

An A is meant to indicate **excellent** or **outstanding** work. A grade of B+ is meant to indicate work that is **very good** but not quite excellent or outstanding. A grade of B is meant to indicate **good** work. A grade of C+ is meant to indicate work that is **highly satisfactory** but not quite good. A grade of C is meant to indicate **satisfactory** work. A grade of D grade is meant to indicate work that cannot fairly be described as satisfactory but that nonetheless is **barely passable**. If your grade in this course is important to you, please make sure that your work regularly meets the standard that corresponds with the grade you are seeking. I will do my best to make my expectations clear throughout the course, and will frequently provide you with feedback to help you avoid unpleasant surprises.

You can earn up to one thousand points in this course (not counting bonus points, which are added to your total out of a thousand). Your final score, divided by ten, becomes your overall percentage score for the course. The opportunities to earn points are as follows:

<u>Work</u>	<u>Maximum Score</u>
Argument mapping homework.....	120 points
Technical test.....	80 points
Weekly team homework	10 points x 10 = 100 points
Individual team homework (students picked by weekly lottery)....?	? points x ? = 100 points
Midterm exam.....	200 points
Peer evaluation.....	100 points
Final exam.....	300 points
Total.....	1000 points

Bonus points

Team bonus for Tuesday activities2 x up to 15 points
 Leaderboard bonus.....up to 50 points each for the quickest 25 completers

Schedule:

Module 1 (January 22nd to February 10th): *The Basics*

Purpose:

- to understand the structure and methods of the course
- to understand the aims and methods of philosophy and its subdiscipline, ethics;
- to be able to distinguish ethical issues from non-ethical issues;
- to develop techniques in argument analysis, argument building, and argument mapping.

Explanation:

In addition to watching the first instructional videos and taking part in the in-class activities during our online meetings on Tuesdays (starting on Tuesday the 29th), students will solve a number of puzzles and exercises, many of which will involve work on Rationale (on which students must have an account). Each puzzle or exercise will test students' ability to apply the lessons of a brief video. First-half teams will also be formed

during this module.

Important dates:

Tuesday, January 22nd: no online meeting. Students watch the first videos on their own schedule and begin work on the puzzles.

Sunday, January 27th: students should aim to have all the first week's puzzles completed by this date. **(This counts toward the leaderboard bonus).**

Monday, January 28th: students should have their Rationale accounts set up and begin working on the first argument mapping exercises.

Tuesday, January 29th: our first scheduled online meeting, from 1pm to 2:30pm. Instructions for getting into the online meeting system will be given out in advance.

Sunday, February 3rd: the first 15 argument mapping exercises must be completed by 11:59pm on this date. **(This week's exercises are worth a total of 10 points).**

Monday, February 4th: students should begin working on the next round of argument mapping exercises.

Tuesday, February 5th: our second scheduled online meeting, again (as always from 1pm to 2:30pm). First-half teams will be announced on this day, and the teams will work together on their first Tuesday activities **(These Tuesday activities count toward the team bonus).**

Sunday, February 10th: argument mapping exercises 16-27, and abductive argument activities 1-3, must be completed by 11:59pm on this date. **(This week's exercises are worth a total of 10 points).**

Module 2 (February 11th to March 2nd): *First Steps in Ethical Theory*

Purpose:

- to learn to identify, avoid, and explain the problems in the four major blunders common to beginners in moral thinking: improper appeals to practice, relativism, authority-based ethics, and egoism.
- to learn to understand and apply two major theories of morality: the social contract theory and consequentialism.
- to learn some of the main objections to those two major theories, and some responses to them.
- to apply the main ideas of the module to some practical problems.

Explanation:

The Technical Test on February 12th will ensure that you understand the technical aspects of arguments and argument mapping, as well as the mechanics of the course, all of which will have been taught in Module 1. Anyone who does *not* score well on the Technical Test is advised to review the Module 1 material carefully. Module 2 builds on the foundations established in Module 1. Students will apply their argument mapping techniques in their study of moral blunders and moral theories, which will be tested with argument mapping exercises on Rationale. Students also begin to work on team homework together, in their Slack channels.

Important dates:

Tuesday, February 12th: Technical Test, on campus. (The Technical Test is worth 80 points).

Tuesday, February 19th: our scheduled online meeting. Also, the first team homework will be assigned. **(Tuesday activities count toward the team bonus).**

Sunday, February 24th: the argument mapping exercises on moral blunders must be completed by 11:59pm on this date. **(These are worth a total of 6 points).** There will also be a few more leaderboard puzzles due on this date. **These count toward the leaderboard bonus.**

Tuesday, February 26th: our scheduled online meeting. **(Tuesday activities count toward the team bonus).** The second team homework will be assigned. Also, **the first team homework is due at noon today (this counts toward the weekly team homework and weekly individual homework scores).**

Sunday, March 2nd: the argument mapping exercises on the social contract theory and utilitarianism must be completed by 11:59pm on this date. **(These are worth a total of 4 points).**

Module 3 (March 3rd to March 31st): *Our First Philosopher: Derek Parfit*

Purpose:

- to engage for the first time with the writing of a major philosopher, and to develop the ability to read and think about his work carefully through argument mapping and critical discussions.
- to learn to think critically about some of the finer points of moral theory.
- to apply the main ideas of the module to some practical problems.

Explanation:

Students who have completed Module 2 successfully should have a solid grasp of consequentialism, be well aware of the main moral blunders to avoid, and have a good grasp of the basics of argument analysis and mapping. With these skills in hand, it's at last time to meet our first moral philosopher, Derek Parfit. Parfit will take your understanding of consequentialism to a higher level by challenging you to think through a number of tricky points in that moral theory. The emphasis in this module will be on *analysis*.

Important dates:

Tuesday, March 5th: our scheduled online meeting. (**Tuesday activities count toward the team bonus**). Also, the third team homework will be assigned. Also, **the second team homework is due at noon today (this counts toward the weekly team homework and weekly individual homework scores)**.

Tuesday, March 12th: Midterm exam, on campus (the midterm is worth 200 points). The fourth team homework will be assigned. Also, **the third team homework is due at noon today (this counts toward the weekly team homework and weekly individual homework scores)**.

Friday, March 15th: First-round peer reviews are due on this date. (**Those who have not submitted adequate peer reviews by this date will be moved to a low-performance team for the second half of the course**).

March 16-24: SPRING BREAK.

Monday, March 25th: First-round peer reviews are released to students, and second-half teams are announced.

Tuesday, March 26th: our scheduled online meeting, this time in the second-half teams. (**Tuesday activities count toward the team bonus**). Also, the fifth team homework will be assigned. Also, **the fourth team homework is due at noon today (this counts toward the weekly team homework and weekly individual homework scores)**.

Sunday, March 31st: Module 3 argument maps due (**Your map is worth 30 points**).

Module 4 (April 1st to April 14th): *Our Second Philosopher: Alex Guerrero*

Purpose:

- to explore in more depth, through the writing of a major philosopher, the issue of moral action under uncertainty, and to further develop the ability to read philosophy through more advanced argument mapping and critical discussion.

- to apply the main ideas of the module to some practical problems.
- to generate some original philosophical challenges to a piece of philosophical writing, and use them to confront a major philosopher.

Explanation:

We continue our exploration of moral theory by working closely with a second philosopher, Alex Guerrero. At the conclusion of this module, students will vote on which objections to his views are strongest. The three students who create the greatest objections will have the opportunity to present their objections to the Professor Guerrero in person. The emphasis in this module will be on *synthesis*.

Important dates:

Tuesday, April 2nd: our scheduled online meeting. (**Tuesday activities count toward the team bonus**). Also, the sixth team homework will be assigned. Also, **the fifth team homework is due at noon today (this counts toward the weekly team homework and weekly individual homework scores)**.

Tuesday, April 9th: our scheduled online meeting. (**Tuesday activities count toward the team bonus**). Also, the seventh team homework will be assigned. Also, **the sixth team homework is due at noon today (this counts toward the weekly team homework and weekly individual homework scores)**.

Sunday, April 14th: Module 4 argument maps due (**Your map is worth 30 points**). Also, the **second-round peer reviews** are due today. I will release them on Tuesday the 17th, provided that enough of your teammates have submitted them by then.

Module 5 (April 15th to May 4th): *Our Third Philosopher: Doug Husak*

Purpose:

- to explore, through the writing of a major philosopher, an alternative theory to consequentialism, and to further develop the ability to read philosophy through even more advanced argument mapping and critical discussion.
- to apply the main ideas of the module to some practical problems.

Explanation:

Building on Module 4, we consider a new moral theory: deontology. The emphasis in this module will be on *evaluation*.

Important dates:

Tuesday, April 16th: our scheduled online meeting. (**Tuesday activities count toward the team bonus**). Also, the eighth team homework will be assigned. Also, **the seventh**

team homework is due at noon today (this counts toward the weekly team homework and weekly individual homework scores).

Tuesday, April 23rd: our scheduled online meeting. **(Tuesday activities count toward the team bonus).** Also, the ninth team homework will be assigned. Also, **the eighth team homework is due at noon today (this counts toward the weekly team homework and weekly individual homework scores).**

Tuesday, April 30th: our last scheduled online meeting. **(Tuesday activities count toward the team bonus).** Also, the tenth team homework will be assigned. Also, **the ninth team homework is due at noon today (this counts toward the weekly team homework and weekly individual homework scores).**

Sunday, May 5th: Module 5 argument maps due **(Your map is worth 30 points).**

Tuesday, May 7th: **the tenth team homework is due at noon today (this counts toward the weekly team homework and weekly individual homework scores).**

Friday, May 10th. 9am to 11am: Final Exam, on campus. The final exam is worth 300 points. Immediately following the exam, you will submit your final round peer reviews. **These peer reviews are the ones that count toward your total score: the median peer review score you receive will count for 100 points of your course total.**

Making up missed work: There will be *no opportunities* for making up any missed or late work after the deadline.

There will also be *no opportunities* for any extra work for bonus points, other than the team bonus already mentioned. **This applies to you even if you ask nicely and even if you try to manipulate me with a sob story.** It would be unfair to other students for me to give in to such stories

Students who cannot attend the Technical Test or midterm exam will be permitted to take a different test or exam online. This exam will be proctored carefully to guard against academic fraud or plagiarism. The expenses associated with the online proctoring system must be borne by the student in those cases.

A passing grade for the course will only be given to students who attend the final exam on campus on May 10th. The only exception to this rule, and the only way to make up the final exam if you miss it, is in cases in which a relevant dean writes me an email confirming your inability to attend that exam (and please note that a dean will *not* write such a letter if you, say, decide to leave town during the final exam period to take a family vacation). In such cases, I will arrange for a makeup *on-campus* exam at a

different time.

Grade appeals: Any person or team wishing to appeal a score on any work is welcome to do so -- but *only* if the entity making the appeal a) puts the appeal in writing, and b) clearly indicates, in writing, what that entity is willing to *lose* if the appeal is unsuccessful. No appeal will be considered otherwise. If necessary, I will bring in a qualified third party to make a second assessment.

Preliminary feedback: I will not give any preliminary feedback (that is, feedback before final evaluation) on any assignments. However, students who are struggling with the material are encouraged to attend my office hours to discuss not-for-credit material that will help with assignments.

Opting out of the random individual homework check: Each student is permitted to opt out of the random individual homework check on up to two occasions (as will be explained in a video), but only if he or she indicates this to me *before* I have drawn his or her number. Students who will be absent or late may arrange to have their teammates withdraw them from the draw by contacting them before the start of class.

Conduct during the Technical Test, midterm and final: You may not consult any book or notes or electronic device, or have any electronic device turned on or out of your bag or pocket during a quiz or exam. You may not bring any food or drink to your desk during a quiz or exam. You may only use scrap paper that is supplied to you during a quiz or exam.

You may leave the room at any time, but then you may not return to the room during an exam until the quiz or exam is over. No test or exam that has been removed from my sight may be turned in for credit, and no student who has been out of my sight during a quiz or exam may turn in that quiz or exam for credit. Students with a genuine medical condition that makes it impossible for them to stay in the room for the eighty minutes of the midterm may provide me with a Letter of Accommodation documenting this condition. Those students may take their exams at the Office of Disability Services. They will be given the questions one at a time in a random order, seeing the next question only on completion of the previous question; and will be permitted to leave the exam room only after submitting a final response to the last question they have seen.

No late student may enter the room during a test or exam after a student has left the room.

Students must not do anything to distract other students during an exam. For example, students must not:

a) ask any question or make any comment about how to answer a question on the exam;

- b) say anything to to me, during the exam period about anything at all aside from, in very rare cases, **quietly** asking whether something on the exam is an error;
- c) make any unnecessary noise in arriving late or leaving early;
- d) talk immediately outside the doors of the classroom when the exam is still in session;
- e) loudly sniffle or snort throughout an exam; or
- f) remain in the classroom after completing and turning in their exam.

Cheating and Plagiarizing:

Anyone caught cheating or plagiarizing in any way on any exam, 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. They will certainly involve a permanent note on your transcript indicating to anyone who reads it that you are a cheat. Don't risk it!