

Syllabus for PHIL 107 – Introduction to Ethics
Taught by Justin Kalef, Rutgers University, Spring 2020

Contact information: The easiest way to contact me outside of class is by email, at jkalef@philosophy.rutgers.edu

Office Hours: I will hold office hours every week from 9:30 to 10:30am on Mondays and from 4:30 to 5:30pm on Wednesdays. All students are very welcome to seek assistance from me then: no need to make an appointment. My office is Room 547 in the Gateway Building (106 Somerset – just by the Barnes and Noble with the Rutgers clock).

Text: All readings for this course will be made available online, on our Canvas site.

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 Monday. 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 10th and March 9th will be held *on campus* in a room to be determined. The February 10th session will be a test on the technical material covered up to that point in the course, and the March 9th 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 noon to 2pm on Friday, May 12th.

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). Here's how you subscribe:

- First make a free account at <https://www.rationaleonline.com/accounts/register> ([Links to an external site.](#))

Make your own username and password.

- Next, upgrade your account with the code to a full account. The code is The code is: vevtdw5f. You make the

upgrade here: https://www.rationaleonline.com/accounts/license_code_enter ([Links to an external site.](#))

- Please use Chrome, Firefox, Safari or Edge as a browser.

Office Hours

I will hold office hours from 2:30pm 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:

Work	Maximum Score
Technical test	80 points
Module 2 argument mapping practice	30 points
Weekly team argument mapping homework	200 points (10 x 20 points)
Midterm exam	200 points
Forum participation	90 points (30 points for each of Modules 3, 4 and 5)
Final exam	300 points
Peer evaluation	100 points
Total	1000 points

Bonus points	Maximum Score
Module 1 Argument Mapping Bonus	2 x up to 20 points
Team bonus for Tuesday activities	2 x up to 15 points
Leaderboard bonus	up to 50 points each for the quickest 25

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 21st: Grand opening of the course. Students watch the first videos on their own schedule and begin work on the puzzles.

Saturday, January 25th: students should aim to have all the first week's puzzles completed by this date. (*This counts toward the Leaderboard Bonus*).

Sunday, January 26th: students should have their Rationale accounts set up and begin working on the first argument mapping exercises.

Monday, January 27th: our first scheduled online meeting, from 1pm to 2:30pm. Instructions for getting into the online meeting system will be given out in advance.

Saturday, February 1st: 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 bonus points if submitted on time, and 20 bonus points if submitted by January 30th*).

Sunday, February 2nd: students should begin working on the next round of argument mapping exercises.

Monday, February 3rd: our second scheduled online meeting, again (as always from **1pm to 2:30pm**). Teams will be announced on this day, and the teams will work together on their first Monday activities (*These Monday activities count toward the team bonus*).

Sunday, February 9th: 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 bonus points if submitted on time, and 20 bonus points if submitted by February 7th*).

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

Important Dates:

Monday, February 10th: Technical Test, on campus. (*The Technical Test is worth 80 points*).

Monday, February 17th: our scheduled online meeting. Also, the first team homework will be assigned. (*Monday 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 15 points*). There will also be a few more leaderboard puzzles due on this date. *These count toward the leaderboard bonus.*

Monday, February 26th: our scheduled online meeting. (*Monday activities count toward the team bonus*). The first team homework will be assigned.

Sunday, March 1st: 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 15 points*).

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

Important Dates:

Monday, March 2nd: our scheduled online meeting. (*Monday activities count toward the team bonus*). Also, the second team homework will be assigned. Also, **the first team argument mapping homework is due at noon today** (*this counts toward the weekly team homework score*).

Friday, March 6th: First-round peer reviews are due.

Saturday, March 7th: First-round peer reviews are released to students.

Monday, March 9th: Midterm exam, on campus (*the midterm is worth 200 points*). The third team homework will be assigned. Also, **the second team argument mapping homework is due at noon today** (*this counts toward the weekly team homework score*).

March 14-22: SPRING BREAK.

Monday, March 23rd: our scheduled online meeting. (*Monday activities count toward the team bonus*). Also, the fourth team homework will be assigned. Also, **the third team**

argument mapping homework is due at noon today (*this counts toward the weekly team homework score*)

Monday, March 30th: our scheduled online meeting. (*Monday activities count toward the team bonus*). Also, the fifth team homework will be assigned. Also, **the fourth team argument mapping homework is due at noon today** (*this counts toward the weekly team homework score*)

Sunday, April 5th: cutoff for Module 3 forum work (*Worth 30 points. Those who had still not turned in adequate answers to all the Module 1 argument mapping homework by the start of Module 3 will have 10 points deducted from the forum work score for each week in Module 3 that the Module 1 argument mapping homework was not turned in*).

Module 4 (April 1st to April 14th): *Our Second Philosopher (to be announced)*

Important Dates:

Monday, April 6th: our scheduled online meeting. (*Monday activities count toward the team bonus*). Also, the sixth team homework will be assigned. Also, **the fifth team argument mapping homework is due at noon today** (*this counts toward the weekly team homework score*).

Monday, April 13th: our scheduled online meeting. (*Monday activities count toward the team bonus*). Also, the seventh team homework will be assigned. Also, **the sixth team argument mapping homework is due at noon today** (*this counts toward the weekly team homework score*).

Friday, April 10th: the **second-round peer reviews** are due today. I will release them on **Saturday the 11th**.

Sunday, April 19th: Module 4 forum work cutoff (*worth 30 points. Those who had still not turned in adequate answers to all the Module 1 argument mapping homework by the start of Module 4 will have 15 points deducted from the forum work score for each week in Module 4 that the Module 1 argument mapping homework was not turned in*).

Module 5 (April 20th to May 4th): *Our Third Philosopher (to be announced)*.

Important Dates:

Monday, April 20th: our scheduled online meeting. (*Monday activities count toward the team bonus*). Also, the eighth team homework will be assigned. Also, **the seventh team argument mapping homework is due at noon today** (*this counts toward the weekly team homework score*).

Monday, April 27th: our scheduled online meeting. (*Monday activities count toward the team bonus*). Also, the ninth team homework will be assigned. Also, **the eighth team argument mapping homework is due at noon today** (*this counts toward the weekly team homework score*).

Monday, May 4th: our last scheduled online meeting. (*Monday activities count toward the team bonus*). Also, the tenth team homework will be assigned. Also, **the ninth team argument mapping homework is due at noon today** (*this counts toward the weekly team homework score*).

Sunday, May 10th: Module 5 forum work cutoff (*worth 30 points. Those who had still not turned in adequate answers to all the Module 1 argument mapping homework by the start of Module 5 will have 10 points deducted from the forum work score for each week in Module 5 that the Module 1 argument mapping homework was not turned in*).

Monday, May 11th: **the tenth team argument mapping homework is due at noon today** (*this counts toward the weekly team homework score*).

Tuesday, May 12th: **Final Exam, on campus**. *The final exam is worth 300 points.*

Tuesday, May 12th: **final round peer reviews due. 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* during finals week. 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 come to my office hours to discuss not-for-credit material that will help with assignments.

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 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!