

PHIL 1104: Philosophy and Social Ethics

Course Description

How do we live a good life, in theory? How do we live good lives, in reality? This course is designed to introduce students to a range of ethical theories, as well as an introduction to applied ethics. We will look at traditional ethical principles and what it means to deliberate on ethical decisions, what it is that may influence that deliberation, and how it is that we may be able to apply these principles in our quest for a good life. The second half of this course will focus on contemporary social issues and ethical simulations, encouraging students to engage with creative solutions and critical thinking in relation to modern social-ethical issues.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course students will:

- Understand a range of ethical theories and their arguments.
- Grasp techniques for evaluating theoretical ethical dilemmas.
- Grapple with ethical deliberation from different ethical principles.
- Use ethical theories to evaluate and solve “real life” contemporary issues.

Required Texts

1. [*Doing Ethics: Moral Reasoning, Theory, and Contemporary Issues*](#), Lewis Vaughn
a. ISBN-13: 9781324071266
2. [*Theories of Ethics*](#), Gordon Graham
a. ISBN-13: 9780415999472
3. All other readings will be provided as a PDF

Course Points

Assignments for this course are meant to evaluate students on two methods of learning: comprehension and application. The former, comprehension, will be evaluated through writing and in-class discussion. The latter, application, through simulations and reflections. *This course is graded out of 100 points.*

Assignment	Points Possible	Assignment	Points Possible	Assignment	Points Possible
Participation	13.5	Scenario Report	5	Test #1	15
Discussion Questions	13.5	Scenario Participation	8	Test #2	15
Virtue Week Journal	3	Scenario Reflections	12	Final Paper	15

Course Assignments

Weekly Discussion Questions

Students are expected to submit 1-2 paragraphs in response to the assigned reading after every class. Students must 1) read the assigned texts **prior** to class - the assigned texts are under the date that the reading is due; 2) in-class small group discussion on the reading following the class lecture; 3) respond to all the discussion questions before the start of the **next** class. See the course website for the discussion questions and submission information.

Participation

Students are expected to attend class and participate in active discussion with their classmates. Showing up prepared and using classtime to discuss the texts further will assist students in getting a good participation grade. **If it appears as though many students are unprepared for class discussions, pop quizzes will be assigned.**

Virtue Week & Journal

During "Virtue Week," [September 13th - 19th] students will maintain a journal of all of the virtuous actions they perform, as well as any actions that may "fall short." In-class discussions will reference the journal, so students must be prepared to discuss their actions. At the end of Virtue Week, students will submit their journals with a reflection on their motivations for good actions, and reflection on why actions may have "fallen short." [Adapted from *Virtue*, Battaly (2015)]

Tests

There are two multiple choice tests during the semester. The tests are not cumulative and will be based on all information leading up to that test, only. [*If performance is poor on Test #1, Test #2 will become cumulative]. Students are expected to come prepared with a pen or a pencil.

Group State Development Report

In preparation for the group scenarios, and in reflection of Plato's discussions of a just state in *The Republic*, students will write a "state development report" as a group, in-class. The report is meant to prepare students for the in-class scenarios, by collaborating on their society, their government positions, their ethical principle, their metaphysical background, and so on. While students are provided with basics about their society in order to facilitate an interesting game-scape, students are expected and encouraged to pursue creative development in relation to their society.

Group Scenarios

There are four group scenarios that will take place over two weeks. These scenarios are the **applied ethic** component of this course. Students will be assigned a group and an ethical principle, like Utilitarianism or Existentialism. During the final two weeks of class, students will be presented with an ethical dilemma that is reflective of our current social-political world. Some topics include:

1. Climate change
2. Energy initiatives
3. Immigration & citizen displacement
4. Labor standards
5. Access to education (state funded?)

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6. Access to healthcare (state funded?)
7. Economics of globalization
8. War & Peace
9. Nuclear (non-)proliferation

During each scenario, groups will be presented with a resolution that needs to be decided upon. For example, for questions of a global energy initiative, groups would vote on the following:

1. Decide on an energy initiative. Initial proposals are as follows:
 - a. Ban oil from use worldwide [All oil resources are removed from the game]
 - b. Slow reduction of oil use and global investment in renewable energy research. [-1 oil per scenario; -2 minerals immediately]
 - c. Keep oil use as normal [-1 forest and -1 water per scenario]

The resolutions reached by the vote will impact the resources that each team has, and will impact the future scenarios (choose wisely!). **Students will be graded on their adherence to their ethical principle.** Each scenario should reflect the principle of their state, not of their personal ideologies. Students will need to defend their voting decisions, backed by their knowledge of their assigned principles.

Scenario Reflections

After each of the group scenarios, each *individual* student will write a brief reflection on the scenario. The reflection should include the steps taken to reach a resolution, the results of the resolution, and the expected next steps for their society. Throughout this reflection, students should reference how it is that they used their assigned ethical principle to respond. This is not a group assignment. More information can be found on the course website.

Final Paper

Students are to write a 3 - 5 page final expository essay on their assigned ethical principle. The intention of this essay is to assess student comprehension and application of their assigned principle. Students must explore their topic beyond what has been discussed in class with use of primary texts and other peer-reviewed sources. Students must work to show their expertise by applying their ethical principle to one of the ethical issues highlighted in *Doing Ethics*, Chapter 9 through Chapter 21 (students decide which issue to take up). Using the skills gained from the in-class scenarios, students will respond to one of the issues from the perspective of their assigned ethical principle. **This is an individual assignment, and students are not permitted to co-write these essays with their society group.** Please see the course website for more information.

Extra Credit & Late Policy

Extra credit is not provided for this course. Please make certain to complete all of your work on time to avoid needing extra credit at the end of the semester. The late policy for this course is as follows – written assignments will be deducted 1 point per day late, **up to 5 days after the deadline.** If assignments are submitted after 5 days, the assignment will not be accepted. Due to this policy, there are no extensions available. Scenario assignments, or any assignment that is an in-class assignment cannot be made up; should a student have an excused absence for an in-class assignment, an alternative assignment will be given.

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Course Schedule

<i>Week</i>	<i>Dates</i>	<i>Topics</i>
1	August 31 st - September 6 th	Introduction
2	September 7 th - September 13 th	Egoism, Hedonism, Stoicism
3	September 14 th - September 20 th	Aristotle & Virtue Ethics
4	September 21 st - September 27 th	Existentialism
5	September 28 th - October 4 th	Test #1
6	October 5 th - October 11 th	Kantianism
7	October 12 th - October 18 th	Utilitarianism
8	October 19 th - October 25 th	Contractualism
9	October 26 th - November 1 st	Test #2
10	November 2 nd - November 8 th	Feminist Ethics
11	November 9 th - November 15 th	Environmental Ethics
12	November 16 th - November 22 nd	Ethics of the State
13	November 23 rd - November 29 th	Thanksgiving Break
14	November 30 th - December 6 th	Scenario #1 & #2
15	December 7 th - December 13 th	Scenario #3 & #4
16	December 14 th - December 20 th	Finals Week

Course Readings & Assignments

All readings are due for the date of the class they are listed under; all assignments are due **before the start of the **following** class, unless otherwise stated.*

September 1st

- Topics: Introducing moral questions, right and wrong, basic dilemmas
- Readings:
 - *Doing Ethics*, Chapter 1 [Optional]
 - *Theories of Ethics*, Chapter 1 [Optional]
- Assignments: None

September 3rd

- Topics: Evaluating moral arguments, fallacies, introducing moral theories
- Readings: *Doing Ethics*, Chapter 3 & 4
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

September 8th

- Topics: Egoism, desire, Nietzsche
- Readings:
 - *Theories of Ethics*, Chapter 3
 - *Doing Ethics*, pg. 93 - 99
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

September 10th

- Topics: Hedonism, stoicism, pleasure, nature

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- Readings:
 - *Theories of Ethics*, Chapter 4
 - “Hedonism” [PDF]
 - “Epicurus” [PDF]
 - “Stoicism” [PDF]
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

September 15th

- Topics: Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, the Golden Mean
- Readings:
 - *Theories of Ethics*, Chapter 5
 - “Aristotle’s Ethics” [PDF]
- Assignments:
 - Discussion questions, see course site.
 - **Virtue journal assignment begins September 13th**

September 17th

- Topics: Virtue Ethics
- Readings:
 - *Doing Ethics*, Chapter 7
 - Selections from *Virtue*, Heather Battaly [PDF]
- Assignments:
 - Discussion questions, see course site.
 - **Virtue journal assignment due September 19th**

September 22nd

- Topics: Existentialism, Sartre, Beauvoir, bad faith
- Readings: *Theories of Ethics*, Chapter 6
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

September 24th

- Topics: Existentialism, Sartre, Beauvoir, bad faith
- Readings: *Theories of Ethics*, Chapter 6
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

September 29th

- Topics: Test review, weeks 2, 3, and 4
- Readings: None
- Assignments: Come prepared with questions!

October 1st

- **Test #1**

October 6th

- Topics: Kantianism, categorical imperatives, for the sake of duty

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- Readings:
 - *Theories of Ethics*, Chapter 7
 - *Doing Ethics*, pg. 131-137
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

October 8th

- Topics: Kantianism, categorical imperatives, for the sake of duty
- Readings: *Theories of Ethics*, Chapter 7
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

October 13th

- Topics: Utilitarianism, act and rule utilitarianism, measuring pleasure/happiness
- Readings:
 - *Theories of Ethics*, Chapter 8
 - *Doing Ethics*, pg. 99-103
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

October 15th

- Topics: Utilitarianism, act and rule utilitarianism, measuring pleasure/happiness
- Readings: *Theories of Ethics*, Chapter 8
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

October 20th

- Topics: Social contract theory, mutual benefits
- Readings:
 - *Theories of Ethics*, Chapter 2
 - “Contemporary Approaches to Social Contract” [PDF]
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

October 22nd

- Topics: Contractualism, Scanlon
- Readings: *Theories of Ethics*, Chapter 2
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

October 27th

- Topics: Test review, weeks 6, 7, and 8
- Readings: None
- Assignments: Come prepared with questions!

October 29th

- **Test #2**

November 3rd

- Topics: Feminist ethics, social constructionism, feminist care theory
- Readings:

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- *Doing Ethics*, Chapter 8
- Selections from *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir, [PDF]
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

November 5th

- Topics: Epistemic injustice, contemporary gender/sexuality concerns
- Readings:
 - *Doing Ethics*, either Chapter 9, 14, or 15 [YOUR choice]
 - Selections from *Epistemic Injustice*, Miranda Fricker [PDF]
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

November 10th

- Topics: Environmental ethics, climate change, catastrophe
- Readings:
 - *Theories of Ethics*, Chapter 9
 - *Doing Ethics*, Chapter 13
 - Selections from *Catastrophe Ethics*, Travis Rieder, [PDF]
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

November 12th

- Topics: Animal rights, human and nature, speciesism
- Readings:
 - *Doing Ethics*, Chapter 12
 - *Doing Ethics*, pg. 104-109
 - Selections from *Animal Liberation, NOW*, Peter Singer, [PDF]
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

November 17th

- Topics: A just state, Plato & *The Republic*, just democracy
- Readings:
 - *Doing Ethics*, either Chapter 16, 18, 19, or 20 [YOUR choice]
 - Selections from *The Republic*, Plato [PDF]
- Assignments: Discussion questions, see course site.

November 19th

- Topics: Designing a just state, blending ethics and politics
- Readings:
 - Review readings from your team's ethical principle!
- Assignments: State Development Report [IN-CLASS]

November 24th

- No Classes, Thanksgiving Break

November 26th

- No Classes, Thanksgiving Break

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December 1st

- Group Scenario #1: Climate change & citizen displacement

December 3rd

- Group Scenario #2: Labor standards & access to education

December 8th

- Group Scenario #3: Economics of globalization

December 10th

- Group Scenario #4: War & nuclear proliferation

Finals Week

- No in-person final
- **Final written assignment due December 20th**