

Phil 28: Ethics and Society II

Summer Session II 2021

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Teaching Assistants:

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Course Description:

This course is a survey of topics in applied ethics. These include bioethics, social ethics, environmental ethics, neuroethics, and ethics of artificial intelligence. No previous knowledge of philosophy, logic, or ethics is required or assumed, though contributions from students with previous training in various disciplines is welcome.

Learning Outcomes:

Students should be able to demonstrate their understanding of important topics in applied ethics by engaging in discussions, completing written exams, and writing and revising an original essay that argues for or against a specific thesis related to applied ethics, and participating in peer review of a classmate's essay.

Lectures:

Only the first lecture will be live on Zoom. After that, all lectures will be pre-recorded and posted to the media gallery to be viewed at your convenience. There is a lecture corresponding to each reading. This means that the lectures will be short (~30 min each), but there will be 3-5 lectures per week that you need to watch.

Assessments:

The assessments in this course are largely designed to keep you engaged with the lectures, readings, and other students in the course. Your grades for discussion, quizzes, the essay draft, and peer review total 60% of your grade. It should be easy to do well on these components if you stay engaged. The take-home midterm and final essay will be graded on quality and in order to get top marks on these components you will be required to demonstrate understanding of the material (for the midterm) and some original philosophical insight (for the final essay). Your final grade in the course will be composed of the following:

Discussion Attendance – 15%

Students are encouraged to attend live discussion sessions on Zoom. These sessions will not be recorded for asynchronous viewing. Attending live discussion is the easiest and most beneficial way to complete this assessment. You may miss two discussion sessions without an excuse and still receive full points. Students who will be unable to attend live discussion regularly may choose instead to submit a one-page critical reaction to one of the readings for each session. You may miss two papers without an excuse and still receive full points. **But you must notify your TA by the end of week 1 if you are choosing the response paper option.** After week 1 students are committed to either the live discussion or the response papers for the duration of the course. Response papers should be emailed directly to your TA.

Weekly Online Quizzes – 15%

Quizzes will be timed, multiple-choice, and accessible through Canvas, **posted each Thursday by 11:59pm and due each Sunday 11:59pm**. The goal of the quizzes is to assess whether students are keeping up with reading and lectures. They are designed to be quite easy for students who do so.

Take-home midterm – 20%

The midterm will consist of two short essays (1-2 pages each). Students will be provided four essay prompts and may choose to write on any two of them. The essay prompts will be on topics from weeks 1-2 of the course. The short essays should demonstrate understanding of the claims and arguments from the readings and lectures on the given topic. **The essay prompts will be posted Thursday, 8/12 by 11:59pm and the midterm will be due Sunday, 8/15 by 11:59pm, submitted through Canvas.**

Essay draft – 15%

One of the most important parts of writing an essay is revision. Students will be required to turn in a rough draft of their final essay, **due Sunday, 8/22 submitted through Canvas with no name or identifying information on the document**. The essay should present and develop an original thesis on some topic in applied ethics. Prompts will be provided, but students are welcome to develop their own essay topics. The essay should be narrowly focused on a very specific claim, likely a single premise in an argument presented in a lecture or reading. Provide an original argument for your view about that claim and consider objections to your argument. The essay should be 5 pages (1250 words), give or take a page. The rough draft will then be sent by your TA to a classmate for peer review. It should be easy to get full points for your draft so long as it reflects an honest effort to make a cogent argument.

Peer review – 15%

Students will read and provide both critical and constructive comments on a classmate's essay draft. The essays to review will be assigned and emailed to you by the TAs. The review will consist of a one-page document that briefly summarizes the thesis and argumentative strategy of the essay, notes any positive qualities, points out areas that require revision, and explains why those revisions are recommended. The assignment is **due Thursday, 8/26 by 11:59pm**. There are four possible grades on the peer review – 0 points for non-existent, 5 points for inadequate, 10 points for adequate, and 15 points for excellent.

Final Essay – 20%

Students will revise their essay, taking into account the comments they receive. You are almost certainly expected to make significant changes to your essay in order to get top marks. The final draft will be graded on quality, not merely on effort. **The final draft will be due 9/2 at 11:59pm.**

Course Schedule

Week 1 – Bioethics

Mon. 8/2

1. Ethical theory review – Video lecture only

Abortion

2. Patrick Lee & Robert George – “The Wrong of Abortion”

Wed. 8/4

3. Margaret Olivia Little – “The Moral Permissibility of Abortion”
Birth
4. David Benatar – “Why Coming Into Existence is Always a Harm”

Week 2 – Social Ethics

Mon. 8/9

Affirmative Action

1. Albert Mosley – “A Defense of Affirmative Action”
2. Celia Wolf-Devine – “Preferential Policies Have Become Toxic”

Wd. 8/11

Racism

3. Lawrence Blum – “Racism: What It Is and What It Isn’t”
4. Tommie Shelby – “Racialism, Moralism, and Social Criticism”

Week 3 – Environmental ethics

Mon. 8/16

Climate Change and Individual Responsibility

1. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong – “It’s Not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations”
2. Melany Banks – “Individual Responsibility for Climate Change”

Wed. 8/18

Geoengineering

3. Rayner et al. – “The Oxford Principles”
4. Gardiner – “Is ‘Arming the Future’ With Geoengineering Really the Lesser Evil?”

Week 4 – Neuroethics

Mon. 8/23

Mental Enhancement

1. Anjan Chatterjee – “The Promise and Predicament of Cosmetic Neurology”
2. Nick Bostrom & Anders Sandberg – “Cognitive Enhancement – Methods, Ethics, Regulatory Challenges”

Wed. 8/25

Predictive Implants

4. Frederic Gilbert – “A Threat to Autonomy? The Intrusion of Predictive Brain Implants”
5. Mary Jean Walker & Catriona Mackenzie – “Neurotechnologies, Relational Autonomy, and Authenticity”

Week 5 – Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

Mon. 8/30

Autonomous machines

1. Eric Schwitzgebel – Will your driverless car kill you so that others may live?
2. Vincent C. Miller – Autonomous cognitive systems in real-world environments
3. Daniele Amoroso & Guglielmo Tamburrini – The ethical and legal case against autonomy in weapons systems

Wed. 9/1

Algorithms

4. John Danaher – The threat of algocracy: Reality, resistance, and accommodation
5. Peter M. Asaro – AI ethics in predictive policing: From models of threat to an ethics of care

Diversity and Inclusion:

Individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders (and identities & expressions thereof), national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability - and other visible and non-visible differences are welcome in this course. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. We will be discussing controversial topics in this class and students may confront views that they find wrong or even reprehensible. Where possible I would like to confront those views with reasoned arguments. If you find that a particular reading or assignment is so emotionally charged that it interferes with your ability to complete it, send me an email and we'll see if there is a solution that we can all be happy with.

OSD Accommodation:

If you require any form of accommodation on the grounds of disability, please make sure you have registered with the Office for Students with Disabilities and have followed their guidelines for alerting instructors to your particular needs. The university's policy on the accommodation of disability can be found here: <https://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/Appendices/3> Students requesting accommodations for this course due to a disability must provide a current Authorization for Accommodation (AFA) letter issued by the Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) which is located in University Center 202 behind Center Hall. Students are required to present their AFA letters to Faculty (please make arrangements to contact me privately) and to the OSD Liaison in the department in advance so that accommodations may be arranged. 858.534.4382 (phone) | osd@ucsd.edu (email) | <http://disabilities.ucsd.edu> (website)

Religious Accommodation:

If you require any accommodation on religious grounds, please alert me in writing as soon as possible. The university's policy on religious accommodation can be found here: <https://senate.ucsd.edu/operating-procedures/educational-policies/courses/epc-policies-on-courses/policy-exams-including-midterms-final-exams-and-religious-accommodations-for-exams/>

Academic Integrity:

All instances of academic offences including plagiarism, cheating on exams, and multiple submission of work, will be handled in accordance with official UCSD policy, which can be found here: <http://senate.ucsd.edu/Operating-Procedures/Senate-Manual/Appendices/2>. Please read the policy and ensure that you understand it.

Integrity Statement:

"Academic Integrity is expected of everyone at UC San Diego. This means that you must be honest, fair, responsible, respectful, and trustworthy in all of your actions. Lying, cheating or any other forms of dishonesty will not be tolerated because they undermine learning and the University's ability to certify students' knowledge and abilities. Thus, any attempt to get, or help another get, a grade by cheating, lying or dishonesty will be reported to the Academic Integrity Office and will result sanctions. Sanctions can include an F in this class and suspension or dismissal from the University. So, think carefully before you act by asking yourself: a) is what I'm about to do or submit for credit an honest, fair, respectful, responsible & trustworthy representation of my knowledge and abilities at this time and, b) would my instructor approve of my action? You are ultimately the only person responsible for your behavior. So, if you are unsure, don't ask a friend—ask your instructor, instructional assistant, or the Academic Integrity Office. You can learn more about academic integrity at academicintegrity.ucsd.edu" (Source: Academic Integrity Office, 2018)