

Phil 13: Introduction to Philosophy: Ethics

Summer Session I 2022

Instructor: Nathaniel Greely Email: ngreely@ucsd.edu Office Hours:

Teaching Assistants:

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to ethical theory. We will examine the most prominent accounts of what makes something morally right or wrong. These accounts include Utilitarianism, Deontology, Social Contract Theory, Divine Command Theory, Cultural Relativism, Ethical Egoism, Care Ethics, and Virtue Ethics. Our approach will be analytic, meaning that arguments for and against each theory will be constructed and then evaluated for internal consistency and consistency with empirical data. 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 ethical theory by engaging in discussions, completing written exams, and writing and revising an original essay that argues for a specific thesis related to ethical theory.

Textbook:

The text for this course is *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* by James Rachels, 9th Edition. The text is available in the bookstore and is widely available in other venues. Earlier editions are acceptable (and cheaper), but you must obtain some version of the text. Two additional, short readings will be posted to Canvas.

Lectures:

Only the first lecture will be live on Zoom. After that, all lectures will be prerecorded and posted to the media gallery to be viewed at your convenience. Each lecture will be relatively short – less than an hour. There will be 2-3 lectures per week that you need to watch. Discussion sections will be live on Zoom.

Assessments:

The assessments in this course are largely designed to keep you engaged with the lectures, readings, discussions, and other students in the course. Your grades for discussion, quizzes, essay proposal, 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 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 grade in the course will be composed of the following:

Discussion Attendance and Participation – 15%

Students are encouraged to attend live discussion sessions on Zoom. These sessions will not be recorded for asynchronous viewing, so as to encourage participation. Attending live discussion is the easiest and most beneficial way to complete this assessment. Your TA may also impose other requirements, such as online discussion posts. 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 the readings and lectures. They are designed to be quite easy for students who do so.

Midterm – 20%

The midterm will consist of two short essays (1-2 pages each, 12-point font, 1-inch margins, double-spaced). 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 midterm prompts will be posted 7/7 and the midterm will be due 7/10 11:59pm, submitted through Canvas.**

Essay Proposal – 15%

One of the most important parts of writing an essay is revision. Students will be required to turn in a brief proposal that summarizes the main arguments of their final essay, **due 7/17 11:59pm, posted to a discussion board on Canvas.** The proposal should present an original thesis regarding some topic in ethical theory covered in the course and describe the argumentative strategy you plan to employ to defend that thesis. Prompts will be provided (posted to Canvas by 7/10), but students are welcome to develop their own essay topics. The proposal should be narrowly focused on a very specific claim, likely a single premise in an argument presented in a lecture or reading. The proposal should be no longer than 250 words. The proposals will then receive comments from your instructors and classmates, which you should consider when writing the final version of the essay. It should be easy to get full points for your proposal so long as it reflects an honest effort to formulate an original thesis and argumentative strategy.

Peer review – 15%

Each student will read and provide critical or constructive comments on two classmates' essay proposals. You may choose any proposal on which to comment, but try to distribute them evenly so that everyone receives peer feedback. The comments can take the form of questions about parts of the proposal that are unclear, potential objections to the argument presented, or constructive advice on how to develop the argument. The comments are **due 7/24 11:59pm.** You should receive full points for the peer review so long as your comments reflect an honest effort to engage thoughtfully with the proposals.

Final Essay – 20%

Students will complete a 4-6 page essay (12-point font, 1-inch margins, double-spaced), taking into account the comments on the proposal. The final draft will be graded on quality, not merely on effort. **The final draft will be due 7/30 11:59pm.**

Course Schedule

Week 1 (6/27 – 7/3) – Objective Morality

Readings: Rachels Ch. 1-3
Lecture 1 – Rachels Ch. 1
Lecture 2 – Rachels Ch. 2
Lecture 3 – Rachels Ch. 3
Quiz 1 Due – 7/3 11:59pm

Week 2 (7/4 -7/10) – Utilitarianism

Readings: Rachels Ch. 7-8; Mill
Lecture 4 – Rachels Ch. 7
Lecture 5 – Rachels Ch. 8
Lecture 6 – J. S. Mill
Midterm Prompts Posted – 7/7 11:59pm
Quiz 2 Due – 7/10 11:59pm
Midterm Due – 7/10 11:59 pm
Essay Prompts Posted – 7/10 11:59 pm

Week 3 (7/11 – 7/17)– Deontology

Readings: Rachels Ch. 9-10; Kant
Lecture 7 – Rachels Ch. 9
Lecture 8 – Rachels Ch. 10
Lecture 9 – Kant
Quiz 3 Due – 7/17 11:59pm
Essay Proposal Due – 7/17 11:59pm

Week 4 (7/18 – 7/24)– Religion, Egoism, Social Contract

Readings: Rachels Ch. 4-6
Lecture 10 – Rachels Ch. 4
Lecture 11 – Rachels Ch. 5
Lecture 12 – Rachels Ch. 6
Quiz 4 Due – 7/24 11:59pm
Peer Review Due – 7/24 11:59pm

Week 5 (7/25 – 7/31)– Virtue Ethics, Care Ethics, Conclusions

Readings: Rachels Ch. 11-13
Lecture 13 – Rachels Ch. 11
Lecture 14 – Rachels Ch. 12
Lecture 15 – Rachels Ch. 13
Final Essay Due – 7/30 11:59pm
Quiz 5 Due – 7/31 11:59pm

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 offenses 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)