

# Phil 300: Ethics

Fall 2023

T/Th 9:35am-11:15am HUM 112

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Office Hours: 8:30-9:30am T/TH HUM 224

## 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. We will also cover prominent accounts of justice by Nozick, Rawls, and Nussbaum. 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, 9<sup>th</sup> 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. Additional readings will be posted to Blackboard.

## 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:

### Attendance and Participation – 15%

Lecture attendance is required. In lecture I will not only present and explain the readings, but we will engage in active learning projects. Being in class is essential to these activities. Exceptions will only be made with a documented excuse, such as a doctor's note. You may miss up to three lectures without an excuse and still receive full marks for attendance. You are also required to make one post to a discussion board on Blackboard before each lecture, asking a question about the day's assigned reading or critiquing some argument in the reading. You may miss up to three posts without an excuse and still receive full marks for participation.

**Quizzes – 15%**

At the end of each two-week unit, we will devote one class period to review, followed by a short quiz on that unit. 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.

**Midterm – 15%**

The midterm take place in class Oct. 12. It will consist of two short essays (1-2 pages each). Students will be provided four essay prompts ahead of time and may choose to write on any two of them. The essay prompts will be on topics from units 1-3. 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 provided Oct. 5 and students will have until the day of the exam to craft a response to the two they choose. The midterm will be taken in class with no access to notes.

**Research Proposal – 10%**

Students will give a five-to-ten-minute presentation in front of the class in which they explain the thesis they plan to argue for in their essay and outline the argumentative strategy they will employ. This will be followed by a five-minute question and answer session. Your thesis and arguments may change over the course of composing the draft and revising it into a final paper. This assignment is designed to get you thinking about your essay early-on and receive feedback on how it may be improved. Students are free to choose any topic that interests them. Specific prompts will also be provided as models for the appropriate scope of the essay, and students may choose to write on those prompts if they wish. Prompts will be provided Oct. 12 after the midterm. Research proposals presentations will be in-class 10/31, 11/2, and 11/7.

**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 essay, due Nov. 21. The essay should present and develop an original thesis on one of the topics of the course. 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. It should be easy to get full points for your draft so long as it reflects an honest effort to make a cogent argument.

**Final Essay – 15%**

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 essay will be due Dec. 7.

**Final Exam – 15%**

The final exam will be similar in format to the midterm exam. It will consist of three short essays (1-2 pages each). Students will be provided six essay prompts ahead of time and may choose to write on any two of them. The essay prompts will be on topics from units 4-6. 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 provided Dec. 6. We will then devote two class sessions to review. The final exam will be take-home, due on Blackboard in PDF format Date TBD.

## **Course Schedule**

### **Unit 1 – Objective Morality**

8/29 – Course Introduction  
8/31 – Rachels Ch. 1 & 2  
9/5 – Rachels Ch. 3; Hume  
9/7 – Review and Quiz

### **Unit 2 – Religion, Egoism, Social Contract**

9/12 – Rachels Ch. 4; Plato  
9/14 – Rachels Ch. 5; Rand  
9/19 – Rachels Ch. 6; Hobbes  
9/21 – Review and Quiz

### **Unit 3 – Utilitarianism**

9/26 – Rachels Ch. 7  
9/28 – Rachels Ch. 8  
10/3 – Mill; Singer  
10/5 – LeGuin; Midterm Prompts Posted  
10/10 – Review and Quiz (review for Midterm also)  
10/12 – Midterm; Essay Prompts Posted

### **Unit 4 – Deontology**

10/17 – Rachels Ch. 9  
10/19 – Rachels Ch. 10  
10/24 – Kant; Korsgaard  
10/26 – Review and Quiz  
10/31 – Essay Proposals  
11/2 – Essay Proposals  
11/7 – Essay Proposals

### **Unit 5 – Virtue Ethics, Care Ethics, Conclusions**

11/9 – Rachels Ch. 11; Aristotle  
11/14 – Rachels Ch. 12; Gilligan  
11/16 – Rachels Ch. 13  
11/21 – Review and Quiz; Essay Draft Due

11/24 – Thanksgiving Break

### **Unit 6 – Theories of Justice**

11/28 – Nozick; Rawls  
11/30 – Nussbaum  
12/5 – Review and Quiz; Final Exam Prompts Posted  
12/7 – Review for Final; Final Essay Due  
? – Final Exam

## **GRADING**

Numeric	Grade	Numeric	Grade
Over 93%	A	73% to 76%	C
90% to 92%	A-	70% to 72%	C-
87% to 89%	B+	67% to 69%	D+
83% to 86%	B	63% to 66%	D
80% to 82%	B-	60% to 62%	D-
77% to 79%	C+	<60%	F

#### CARNEGIE/STUDENT WORKLOAD -

Activity	Instructor-Led		Independent		Remarks
	Weekly	Course	Weekly	Course	
Class Meetings	4	60			
Course Readings			4	60	
Midterm Prep				5	
Research Proposal				10	
Essay Draft				10	
Final Essay				20	
Quiz Prep				10	
Final Exam Prep				5	
Total Hours		60		120	

#### TECHNOLOGY REQUIREMENTS FOR BLACKBOARD

Even though this is an on-ground, on-campus, face-to-face, in-person class, some components of your class could be placed on Blackboard (e.g., syllabus).

#### *Hardware & Software*

	Windows	Mac OS X
Operating System	Windows 10	OS X 10.12 or later version
Java	Most recent version	Most recent version

### *Browser*

Your browser must always be up to date. We recommend Firefox and Chrome for all Blackboard functions. If you are experiencing problems on another browser, please switch to Firefox or Chrome. To check your browser and system compatibility with Blackboard, please use the Blackboard Browser Checker below to view your functionality. *Please note that checkmarks on all functions does not guarantee a seamless experience.*

Click here: [Blackboard Browser Checker](#)

### **Internet**

Bandwidth: recommended requirement is 5 Mbps per device or higher; anything less will cause potential issues.

Note: Bandwidth is affected by distance from the wireless router or access point, use of Netflix video streaming and number of users on the wireless network.

Streaming services: Sites or applications that use the internet like YouTube, Netflix, P2P, Spotify, or Pandora must be closed before starting a Zoom session.

Connection: You must be connected to the internet via an ethernet cable or Wi-Fi. Hotspots do not have the bandwidth to handle Zoom sessions.

Wi-Fi: Be as close to the router access point as possible to get the best connection. Be aware that locations with free Wi-Fi, i.e. Starbucks or Barnes & Noble, cannot provide enough bandwidth for Zoom sessions and should not be used.

Use the following link to check your speed. Click here: <http://speedof.me>

### **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.

### **Academic Accommodation:**

If you require any form of accommodation on the grounds of disability, please visit this link: <https://www.callutheran.edu/students/disability-services/register.html> well in advance so that you can submit the necessary documents.

Contact information is [dss@callutheran.edu](mailto:dss@callutheran.edu), Phone: (805) 493-3464, Disability Support Services, 60 W. Olsen Rd. #5300, Thousand Oaks, CA, 91360

**Religious Accommodation:**

If you require any accommodation on religious grounds, please alert me in writing as soon as possible.

**Academic Integrity:**

All instances of academic offences including plagiarism, cheating on exams, and multiple submission of work, will be handled in accordance with official policy, which can be found here:

<https://catalog.callutheran.edu/undergraduate/academicpolicies/>. Please read the policy and ensure that you understand it.