

Introduction to Ethics

PHI 1123 02
Fall 2015

MWF 10-10:50
PM

ETHRDG 223A

Mississippi State
University



Course Description and Objectives

In this course we will look at the study of ethics

This is an introduction to ethics and moral philosophy incorporating both contemporary and historical texts all within the setting of Western Philosophy. Although we know much about the world around us, answers to important questions about how we should live our lives remain controversial. In this class we will look at some of these questions and answers that have been given to them. One of the central and reoccurring themes will be whether there is a correct general moral theory to guide our actions and dictate why an action is right or wrong. We will evaluate theories that attempt to coherently organize aspects of our thinking and experience on moral issues. In doing this we

will also consider specific moral cases including global poverty, homosexuality, animal rights, and abortion.

Student Learning Outcomes:

At the end of this course, as a student, you should be able to do the following:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of philosophical concepts in moral reasoning through written assignments and exams;
- Apply feminist ethics, virtue ethics, utilitarianism, and deontology to different contemporary moral issues;
- Recognize how values are re-

flected in different moral theories;

- Critically evaluate and assess moral theories and moral decision procedures, and then communicate those assessments both written and orally;
- Identify central arguments within a philosophical text.

What's in this syllabus?

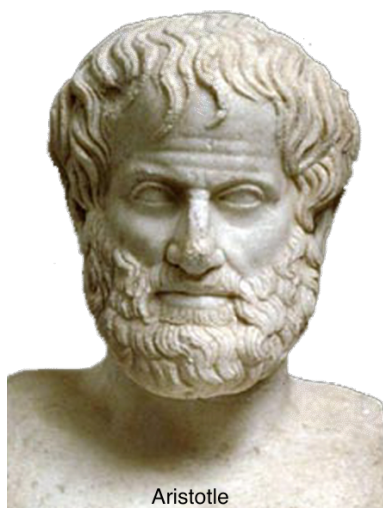
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Course Details

Website: MyCourses/Blackboard

Required text: Russ Shafer-Landau (2014). *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Philosophy* 3rd Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.

Required text: Russ Shafer-Landau (2014). *The Fundamentals of Ethics* 3rd Edition. New York: Oxford University Press.



Aristotle

Instructor: Dr. David Spewak

Office: Etheredge 228C
Email: dspewak@philrel.msstate.edu
Office Hours: MW 1-2PM & by appt.

Course Requirements

This course involves reading, writing, and group discussion. You will need to put in consistent effort throughout the entire semester. You will need to speak up in class and demonstrate active learning, not passive absorption.

Participation (10%) You are expected to attend lectures prepared, i.e. having done the reading and ready to discuss the material. Your participation grade will be based on how you take part in class discussions. Just showing up for class will not result in getting your class participation grade.

Journaling (15%) To encourage close reading of the text and facilitate discussion, you will be keeping a reading journal online through myCourses. For each entry you will be

given some questions to answer regarding the reading. Your journal entries should minimally discuss those questions.

Essays (40%) There will be four short writing assignments. They are to be a maximum of 2 pages (double spaced) in length. The purpose of these essays is to show me that you understand the material we have covered and can apply it. To do this you will want to make sure that you make your points clearly and precisely. Part of doing philosophy well is being able to communicate your ideas clearly. These are not research papers, so you will not need to look at any sources beyond the course texts.

Exams (35%) There will be both a midterm exam (10/2) and final exam (12/4).

Grading Scale:

Participation	10%	
Journaling	15%	
Essay 1	10%	Friday 4 September 2015
Essay 2	10%	Friday 25 September 2015
Midterm Exam	15%	Friday 2 October 2015
Essay 3	10%	Friday 23 October 2015
Essay 4	10%	Friday 6 November 2015
Final Exam	20%	Friday 4 December 2015

NB There will be no extra-credit available.

NB* All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

Classroom Expectations

MSU Writing Center: If you need assistance with basic writing skills, I encourage you to contact the Writing Center at <http://www.writingcenter.msstate.edu>. They can help you with grammar, structure, or simply how to approach writing an essay. There is more to writing a paper than content; conveying your ideas in a clear manner is equally important.

Cheating and Plagiarism: The *minimum penalty* for cheating or plagiarism is a *failure in the class* with the grade of XF. It's not worth it, so don't do it. If you have any ques-

tions, please ask me, I'm here to help.

Classroom: I expect that everyone will maintain a classroom conducive to learning. I like an informal atmosphere, but it must be orderly. Thus, everyone is expected to behave with basic politeness, civility, and respect for others. In particular, talking in class is ok if it's part of a class discussion or with me. Private communications are not, especially during quizzes and tests. Neither are reading extraneous materials, using cell phones, or sleeping.

Use of Electronics: I do not allow the use of electronic devices in class. This includes, but is not limited to,

cellphones, tablets, and computers. Any unauthorized use of one of these devices in class will result in a quiz on the most recent reading for the entire class.¹

Suggestions: Suggestions for improvement are welcome at any time. Any concern about the course should be brought first to my attention.



¹Evidence in favor of pen and paper note-taking is discussed [here](#).

Tentative Schedule

Date	Topic	What to Read
8/17	First Day	No reading
8/19	Introduction	FE Introduction
8/21	Reading Philosophy	
8/24	Singer on poverty	EL pgs. 239-230
8/26	Singer cont.	No new reading
8/28	Narveson on feeding the hungry	EL pgs. 231-244
8/31	Narveson cont.	No new reading
9/2	Morality and Religion	FE CH 5; EL 57-65
9/4	Morality and Religion cont.	No new reading
9/7	No Class (Labor Day)	
9/9	MLK	EL pgs. 405-415
9/11	MLK cont.	No new reading
9/14	Natural Law	FE CH 6.
9/16	Natural Law cont.	No new reading
9/18	Homosexuality	EL pgs. 209-222
9/21	Homosexuality cont.	No new reading
9/23	Utilitarianism: Hedonism	EL pgs. 17-26
9/25	Utilitarianism: Hedonism	FE CH 1
9/28	Utilitarianism: Consequentialism	FE CH 9; EL pgs. 77-86
9/30	Criticisms of Utilitarianism	EL 27-32; FE CH 2 & 10
10/2	Midterm Exam	
10/5	No Class (Fall Break)	
10/7	Animal Ethics Norcross	EL pgs. 285-300
10/9	Norcross cont.	
10/12	Animal Ethics Frey	EL pgs. 301-318
10/14	Frey cont.	
10/16	Kantian Ethics	EL pgs. 87-99
10/19	Kantian Ethics	FE CH 11
10/21	Kantian Ethics	FE CH 12
10/23	Kantian Ethics cont.	
10/26	Feminist Ethics	FE CH 18
10/28	Feminist Ethics cont.	
10/30	Feminist Ethics–Lindemann	EL pgs. 135-147
11/2	Abortion–Thomson	EL pgs. 348-360
11/4	Thomson cont.	
11/6	Abortion–Marquis	EL pgs. 361-371
11/9	Marquis cont.	
11/11	Aristotle <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>	EL pgs. 123-134
11/13	Aristotle cont.	
11/16	Virtue Ethics	FE CH 17
11/18	Virtue Ethics cont.	
11/20	Environmental Ethics–Hill	EL pgs. 332-347
11/23	Hill cont.	
11/30	Last Day of Class	
12/4	Final Exam	8-11AM

Daily Expectations

For each class, you will have a reading assignment. It will not be enough to skim the readings prior to lecture. Philosophical texts require careful and critical reading. When reading you should be asking yourself *what* the author is claiming, *why* he or she is making that claim, and you should be attempting to determine *whether that claim is justified*. You need to keep up with the textbook reading on your own. The exams, are based on the textbook and our class discussions will assume that reading has been done prior to class. Unless I specify otherwise you should bring both textbooks with you to class because many days we will be closely looking at the text.

Students with Disabilities: If you need accommodations, please speak to me in advance and make arrangements with Student Support Services, 01 Montgomery Hall, 662-325-3335, or at <http://www.sss.msstate.edu/disabilities/>.

Student Honor Code: Mississippi State has an approved Honor Code that applies to all students. The code is as follows: “As a Mississippi State University student, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.” Upon accepting admission to Mississippi State University, a student immediately assumes a commitment to uphold the Honor Code, to accept responsibility for learning, and to follow the philosophy and rules of the Honor Code. Student will be required to state their commitment on examinations, research papers, and other academic work. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the MSU community from the requirements or the processes of the Honor Code. For additional information, please visit: <http://www.honorcode.msstate.edu/policy/>.

Title IX: MSU is committed to complying with Title IX, a federal law that prohibits discrimination, including violence and harassment, based on sex. This means that MSU’s educational programs and activities must be free from sex discrimination, sexual harassment, and other forms of sexual misconduct. If you or someone you know has experienced sex discrimination, sexual violence and/or harassment by any member of the University community, you are encouraged to report the conduct to MSU’s Director of Title IX/EEO Programs at 325-8124 or by e-mail to titleix@msstate.edu. Additional resources are available at <http://www.msstate.edu/web/security/title9-12.pdf>, or at <http://students.msstate.edu/sexualmisconduct/>.