

Ethics (Phil 2)
Fall 2016 - Section W6221
Thursdays 1:00-3:50PM, Rm 807

Instructor: Phillip Barron

Email address: - pbarron@yccd.edu

Office Hours: Thursdays 12-1pm, Room 846

Course Description

This course is an introduction to the study of ethics, emphasizing the relevance of ethics to everyday decision making. Topics include: the human context of moral reasoning, relativism, subjectivism, religion and ethics, conscience and moral development, ethical egoism, utilitarianism, the ethics of duty, rights ethics, virtue ethics and the good life, and case studies in moral reasoning. (3 units)

This course begins with the assumption that morality is not about dogma. Throughout the semester, we will talk about what motivates us; about how we make moral decisions; about our sources of personal strength, courage, and conviction (i.e. virtues); and about the obligations and duties we share by virtue of our civic status, all in attempt to understand the role that morality plays in our everyday lives.

Moral philosophy is the attempt to achieve a systematic understanding of the nature of morality and what it requires of us. In this course we will gain an understanding of the history of ethics by focusing on the major ethical theories, and then we will examine a number of contemporary moral issues that apply to most of us at one time or another. To help us understand the issues and give us some support as to their possible resolutions, we will read and discuss various ethical theories. We may not, and probably will not, be able to resolve many issues, but we should at least gain a greater understanding of the issues, which should serve as beginnings to possible resolutions.

We will ask questions such as: What is the nature of justice? What is the nature of obligation? Are we subject to any obligations we do not choose? What is the justification and role of the state? What is the nature of rights? Why do we take rights seriously? Is there such a thing as "the common good"? Do the traditional theories of justice and rights accommodate everyone? Are pleasure and pain adequate concepts for defining right and wrong, good and bad?

Course Objectives

In this course, you will learn to:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of major ethical theories, including classical, deontological (Kantian), and consequentialist (Utilitarianism).
2. Apply knowledge of major ethical theories to moral problems.
3. Compare and contrast competing ethical theories and subject them to critical analysis.

Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs)

Students who complete this class will be able to:

1. Define the nature of ethics and moral reasoning.
2. Apply moral reasoning to enduring ethical questions and contemporary moral issues.
3. Outline a coherent and cogent personal statement of fundamental ethical principles.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

The following books will be available in the WCC bookstore. I have provided links to where you can find the books on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) so that you can compare prices. Additional readings will be made available as PDFs on the course website.

Title: *Practical Ethics*

Author: Peter Singer

Publication Date: February 21, 2011

ISBN-10: 0521707684

Title: *The Republic*

Author: Plato

Translator: G. M. A. Grube, revised by C. D. C. Reeve

Publication Date: November 1, 1992

Publisher: Hackett Pub Co

ISBN-10: 0872201368

Title: *Utilitarianism*

Author: John Stuart Mill

Editor: George Sher

Publication Date: June 1, 2002

Publisher: Hackett Pub Co

ISBN-10: 087220605X

Title: *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals: with On a Supposed Right to Lie Because of Philanthropic Concerns*

Author: Immanuel Kant

Translator: James W. Ellington

Publisher: Hackett Pub Co; 3rd edition (June 1, 1993)

Publication Date: June 1, 1993

ISBN-10: 087220166X

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

ASSIGNED READINGS: (SEE SCHEDULE)

QUIZZES:

There will be several quizzes consisting of questions on the readings and lectures. Some will be announced in lecture and given in class. Online assignments will be announced in class and posted to Canvas. You will be expected to contribute to an online discussion of the texts we read and discuss in class with the same manner of civility we bring to class discussions. You will be allowed to drop your lowest quiz grade.

PAPER:

You will write one paper of 2-3 pages on a topic to be announced by the end of the fifth week of class. You will receive more guidance and ample opportunity for discussion of your paper in class.

A COMPREHENSIVE FINAL:

The final exam will be cumulative and will consist of short answers and short essays, similar to those on the quizzes and likely taken from the questions at the end of each reading assignment.

ATTENDANCE & PARTICIPATION:

Philosophy is a full-contact sport. Participation makes for a more enjoyable and interesting class. Discussion is crucial to understanding and reasoning. To get full credit for participation you must attend class, and be prepared to discuss questions and cases from the reading assignments.

YOUR GRADE FOR THE COURSE WILL BE DETERMINED ROUGHLY AS FOLLOWS:

QUIZZES (online and in class)	30%
PAPER	35%
PARTICIPATION	10%
FINAL EXAM	25%

Reading Effectively

In addition to the texts listed above, the rest of your reading assignments are posted on Canvas. In this class, read the assigned readings (listed in your syllabus on the following pages for each class meeting) before the related class. Always bring your reading with you to class. We will go over parts of it together and you will want to be able to follow along and take notes directly in the reading.

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism – copying someone else’s work without giving them credit – is taken very seriously by colleges and universities. I have a zero-tolerance policy for cheating; students who cheat or plagiarize will receive an automatic F on the assignment and will be referred to Administration for disciplinary action as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

Additional Resources

I strongly encourage students to take advantage of the resources on our campus, including the WCC Library, the Media Lab (Room 812 in the library), the Academic Reading Center (Room 870), the Tutoring Center (Room 809) and the Writing and Math Center (WAM) (Room 850).

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS) (Room 769) as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Communication

If you have questions about the reading, the assignments, or philosophy in general, I am happy to meet outside of class. Feel free to email me to arrange a time to meet. I have regular office hours from 10:30-11:30AM on Tuesdays in Room 846 (the Adjunct Faculty Office). If you miss class, please find out what you missed from your fellow students.

Reading Schedule - see next page

	Date	Readings	Assignments
Week 1	8/18	Nagel, "Right and Wrong"; Singer, About Ethics (Ch 1)	
		the problem of relativism	
Week 2	8/25	No class meeting	online reading quiz
		Plato, <i>The Republic</i> Book I	
Week 3	9/1	Plato, <i>The Republic</i> Book II	
Week 4	9/8	Plato, <i>The Republic</i> Books III and IV	
Week 5	9/15	Plato, <i>The Republic</i> Books VII and IX	Paper #1 topic announced
Week 6	9/22	Aristotle, selections from the <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>	
Week 7	9/29	Bentham, "Classical Hedonism"	
		Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i>	
Week 8	10/6	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i>	Paper Due, 1pm
		Trolley Problem	
Week 9	10/13	Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (pp. 1-17)	
		Feldman, "An Examination of Kantian Ethics"	
Week 10	10/20	Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (pp. 19-40)	
Week 11	10/27	Review all Ethical Theory (all readings to this point)	
		Singer, Equality and Its Implications (Ch 2)	
Week 12	11/3	Singer, Equality for Animals (Ch 3)	

	Date	Readings	Assignments
Week 13	11/10	Singer, Rich and Poor (Ch 8)	
Week 14	11/17	Singer, Climate Change and The Environment (Ch 9 & 10)	
		Leopold, "The Land Ethic"	
Week 15	11/24	Holiday - No Class meeting Singer, Taking Life: The Embryo and Fetus (Ch 6)	
		Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"	
Week 16	12/1	Rawls, <i>A Theory of Justice</i> (selections)	
Week 17	12/8	Review & Final Exam - All Ethical Theory and all Peter Singer	

Final Exam Date - in class, December 8

You can earn a quiz grade by emailing me what day and time the Paper is due.