

PHIL 1100: INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

Fall 2013

Instructor: Shane Gronholz

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Office Hours: MWF 1-2, or by appointment, Hellem 15

Textbook: James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (7E)

What matters? This is perhaps the most important question you can ask. How you answer it will have direct implications for other important questions, ones you yourself have likely asked, like:

How should I live my life?

What ought I to do?

What behavior is right and what behavior is wrong?

What do I owe to others?

How should I vote?

Should I get married and, if so, to whom?

Should I go to war?

This course is an introduction to ethics. Different people mean somewhat different things by the term 'ethics,' but a simple and helpful way to understand it, and the way I shall be understanding it throughout the term, is that the study of ethics is the study of what matters. In this course, we will try to discover what matters, and in so doing, shed some light on the questions listed above as well as others. We will do this by considering and making various arguments.

I'm excited about this course and you should be, too! It's going to be lively and fun and you will come out of it a better thinker, and hopefully a better a person, too.

Course Format

The format for this course involves a combination of lecture and class discussion. You should be prepared to engage in discussion every day. That means you'll have to do the readings and come to class.

Text

James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* (7E)

Online

We will be using Desire2Learn. This can be found at learn.colorado.edu. Here, you will find additional assigned readings and the gradebook. The gradebook will be updated as we go, so if you want to see how you are doing in the class, check there.

Requirements

These assignments are designed in part to keep you continually engaged throughout the semester. I would rather have you stay on top of your readings and come to class

prepared and ready to discuss rather than simply cramming for an exam twice over the course of the semester.

1. *Reading Notecards (10%)*. Over the course of the semester, you will turn in 10 reading notecards. These will be handwritten on standard, white 3x5 notecards. **I won't accept anything else.** Each notecard should have two items: (1) A critical comment about the reading. It can be an objection, an implication of the author's thesis, a connection to a previous reading, or any other comment that demonstrates critical engagement with the reading. (2) A question about the reading. It should be a substantive question that shows you have engaged with the reading. Notecards will be accepted only at the beginning of the class. You may only turn in one notecard per week. This means you will have to plan carefully so as not to run out of weeks. They will be evaluated on a credit/no-credit basis. Each card is worth 1% of your grade. If you submit a card that does not meet the requirements or is otherwise lame or unacceptable, you will receive no credit for that card. If you receive a 0 on a card, you will be allowed to submit another card, provided you never turn in more than one card per week. Also, you may not turn in a notecard for a reading after the day on which the reading is assigned. It should be obvious that it is in your interest to get an early start on the reading notecards. A safe approach would be to simply think of them as weekly notecards, though you can miss a few and/or you won't have to do them the last few weeks of class. There is a chance I will read your card anonymously at some point during class.
2. *Weekly Quizzes (50%)*. There will be a quiz every Friday (unless otherwise indicated). The quizzes will cover content from the readings and from the lecture. Anything from the readings or anything I've said in lecture is fair game for the quiz. Therefore, you should read everything assigned and come to class. Take notes, especially when I write something on the board. There will be 14 quizzes but I will drop your two lowest quiz grades. That is a total of 12 quizzes that will count toward your grade, each of which is worth approximately 4% of your total grade. Except for very special cases, like a documented medical emergency, quizzes cannot be made up. If you miss a quiz, you should consider that one of your quizzes to be dropped. Please do not ask me if you can make up quizzes missed due to work, ski trips, or weddings.
3. *Papers (20%)*. There will be two very short writing assignments, 2-3 pages, each worth 10% of your final grade. The point is to develop one argument about something related to the course. It is hard to come up with a good arguments, so although these are very short, you should plan on putting forth a considerable amount of thought and effort. I will discuss papers in detail in class. See the course schedule for due dates.
4. *Debate (10%)*. You will participate in a group debate. There will be three debates. These will be scheduled toward the end of the term (see the class schedule for details). I will discuss the debates in detail in class.
5. *Participation (10%)* Since class discussion is an essential element in this course, your participation in class discussions is required. From time to time,

we will also do some in-class activities. Your level of engagement with these will help to determine your grade. Your treatment of your classmates and the respect you afford them may also impact your grade.

Policies, tips, and other stuff:

Late work: Late papers will be lowered by one “grade increment” for every day they are late (e.g., a B+ paper that is one day late will get a B; a C paper that is two days late will get a D+). Computer crash or theft is not a legitimate excuse. You should be using Dropbox or something like it. It’s free. Talk to me if you have questions about setting up an account. If something extremely dire happens such that an extension is obviously necessary, documentation is required.

Technology in the classroom: Texting during class is prohibited. If you must read or send a text, please step out of the classroom. First-time offenders will be asked to stop. Additional offenses will result in dismissal from class and a loss of participation points. If you use a laptop in class, you may use it only for taking notes. No web-surfing, emailing, IMing, Facebooking, etc. If you use a laptop, disable the wifi.

Extra credit: Extra credit will not be offered. Stay on top of things.

Readings: Keep up with the readings. Anything from the readings is fair game for the quizzes. The amount of reading I have assigned is manageable and it is all well worth your time. Also, philosophy is unlike any other discipline, and you will very likely struggle writing a philosophical paper if you have not read much philosophy.

Email: From time to time, I will be sending you emails with important information about the class, including changes to the readings. You will be responsible for the information I send via email.

Participate a lot: Philosophy is a great deal of fun. Be willing to come to class and participate in the discussion. You will get much more out of the class if you do.

Office Hours: Come to office hours. I like getting to know students and it’s a good chance for you to get help on anything you are struggling with.

Other grading notes: Grades are not a personal evaluation of you, and they do not report how hard you tried. They report only how well you completed the assignments. Do not worry too much about your grade, since for most of you, minor differences between grades will have little to no effect on your future lives.

Plagiarism: The honor code is mentioned in general below under “Fine Print” but I want to highlight plagiarism here. I cannot emphasize enough how important it is for you to understand what constitutes plagiarism. In EVERY SINGLE case of plagiarism I have ever encountered, the student claimed that he or she did not intend to plagiarize. This does

not count as a legitimate excuse. **The minimum penalty for plagiarism is an F for the course**, though even more severe penalties are possible.

Schedule

- 8.26 Welcome, syllabus, intro stuff
- 8.28 Arguments (no reading)
- 8.30 Philippa Foot, "The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect"

- 9.2 Labor day – no class
- 9.4 Rachels, "What Is Morality?"
- 9.6 Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"

- 9.9 *No new reading*
- 9.11 Rachels, "Subjectivism in Ethics"
- 9.13 Rachels, "Does Morality Depend on Religion?" | Plato, "Euthyphro"

- 9.16 *No new reading*
- 9.18 Rachels, "Ethical Egoism" | Plato, "Gorgias" | Plato, "The Ring of Gyges"
- 9.20 *No new reading*

- 9.23 Rachels, "The Social Contract Theory"
- 9.25 Selections from John Rawls A Theory of Justice
- 9.27 *No new reading*

- 9.30 Rachels, "The Utilitarian Approach"
- 10.2 *No new reading*
- 10.4 *Class is canceled*

- 10.7 John Stuart Mill Utilitarianism, chapters 1 & 2
- 10.9 Rachels, "The Debate Over Utilitarianism"
- 10.11 *No new reading*
-First short paper is due-

- 10.14 Rachels, "Are There Absolute Moral Rules?"
- 10.16 *No new reading*
- 10.18 Rachels, "Kant and Respect for Persons"

- 10.21 *No new reading*
- 10.23 W.D. Ross, "What Makes Right Acts Right?"
- 10.25 *No new reading*

- 10.28 Rachels, "Virtue Ethics"
- 10.30 Susan Wolf, "Moral Saints"
- 11.1 *No new reading*

- 11.4 Rachels, "Feminism and the Ethics of Care"
- 11.6 Rachels, "What Would a Satisfactory Moral Theory Be Like?"
- 11.8 *No new reading*
-Second short paper is due-
- 11.11 Don Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"
- 11.13 Judith Jarvis Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"
- 11.15 Debate: Abortion
- 11.18 Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
- 11.20 Garrett Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics: The Case Against Helping the Poor"
- 11.22 **Class Canceled**

-Fall Break-

- 12.2 Debate: Famine Relief (**Quiz**)
- 12.4 Alastair Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs, and People"
- 12.6 Carl Cohen, "The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research"
- 12.9 Debate: Animals (**Quiz**)
- 12.11 TBA
- 12.13 TBA
-Optional paper rewrite is due-

Fine Print:

1. honor code: All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/>

2. classroom environment: Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. See policies at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

3. disabilities: if you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and see <http://www.Colorado.EDU/disabilityservices>

4. religious holidays: campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. If you anticipate any such conflicts this semester, please contact me in a timely manner so that we can make arrangements that will be acceptable to you. For further information see: http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

5. discrimination, harassment, amorous relationships:: The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student in this class who believes he or she has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://www.colorado.edu/odh>