

PHIL 3100: ETHICAL THEORY

Fall 2017

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TTH 3:30-4:45 CLRE 104

TTH 5:00-6:15 VAC 1B90

Office Hours: TTH 2:30-3:30 HLMS 192

"The man who has no tincture of philosophy goes through life imprisoned in the prejudices derived from common sense, from the habitual beliefs of his age or his nation, and from convictions which have grown up in his mind without the co-operation or consent of his deliberate reason." – Bertrand Russell

Course Description

We make moral and evaluative claims all the time: "It was wrong to cheat on that exam," "children should be spanked when they do something wrong," "Donald Trump is a good president," "my life hasn't been going so well lately." But what are we doing when we say things like this? Are we simply expressing a feeling that we have? Could statements like these ever be true? If so, what would *make* them true? And how could we *know* that they are true? These are questions in metaethics and we will devote the first half of the class to exploring answers to them.

In the second half of the course, we will then turn to normative ethics. In normative ethics, we try to figure out which moral claims, and especially which moral principles or rules, are actually true. Consequentialists believe that all that matters are the *consequences* or outcomes of our actions. We will explore this theory, as well as theories about what makes an outcome good or bad (and especially about what makes an outcome good or bad *for* someone). Deontologists reject the view that consequences are all that matter; they believe that an act can be wrong even if it has the best consequences, and that an act can be right even if it has bad consequences. They claim that the ends do not always justify the means. For example, some deontologists believe that an act with good consequences can be wrong because it violates someone's rights. We will explore deontology as well. We will close by asking what morality even is and why we should care about it.

Course Format

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

Course Materials

There is one required book, which is *Ethical Intuitionism* by Michael Huemer, referred to in the schedule below as “EI.” All other assigned readings can be found on Desire2Learn.

Online

We will be using Desire2Learn. This can be found at learn.colorado.edu. On Desire2Learn, you can find the readings that aren’t in the book, Reading Questions (see “Assessment” below), as well as the gradebook to see how well you are doing.

Assessment

1. Exams (40%): You will take a midterm exam (20%) and a final exam (20%).
2. Papers (40%): You will write two papers. Details TBA.
3. Reading Quizzes (20%). There will be quite a few pop quizzes throughout the semester. These quizzes are designed to test that you are doing and understanding the readings, and to give you an incentive never to miss class. For each reading, there will be a set of Reading Questions posted in the Content area of D2L under “Reading Questions.” All of the questions on the pop quizzes will be taken directly from these reading questions. Furthermore, these quizzes are open-note. Thus, as you are doing each reading and taking notes on it, you should write down each question in your notes and then write your answer to it, which you can find by reading, studying, and re-reading the reading. Then bring these notes with you to class. All of the answers to the pop-quiz questions should then be right in your notes! So there is no reason that you all shouldn't ace all of the reading quizzes.
Quizzes are not restricted to readings that were due on the day of the quiz. They might cover readings that were due on earlier days. You are permitted to use notes only that you yourself created from doing the reading; you cannot use or copy a classmate's notes. Though the pop quizzes are open-note, they are not open-book or "open-reading." There might be a short homework assignment or two. If there are, they will be lumped in with your quiz grades.

Policies, tips, and other stuff:

Class mates and missed classes: So that you will have someone from whom to get the notes and any other pertinent information should you miss class, introduce yourself to two classmates and get their email addresses and phone numbers. If you miss class, it is up to you to get yourself caught up. Please don't ask me what you missed. 😊

Class time is special time: Most of your day is ordinary time. You do ordinary things and think and behave in ordinary ways. But class time is special time. Think of the classroom as a sanctified area. Here we become philosophers and think big thoughts. When you enter the classroom, put on your thinking cap, roll up your sleeves, and get ready to do

some serious philosophical thinking. Sit up straight. Pay attention. Be respectful. Challenge the things said by me, our authors, and your classmates.

Attendance: I expect you to come to class every day. Missed class work will be excused only if you (1) have a good reason to be absent from class, (2) can provide documentation of this reason, and (3) have notified me of the absence in advance.

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 already be using a cloud-based service. If something extremely dire happens such that an extension is obviously necessary, documentation is required.

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

Participate a lot: Philosophy is really fun. Try to participate as much as you can, even if you are shy. You will get a lot 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 or talk about your papers.

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.

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

Phone: My phone number is on the top of the syllabus. You may call or text me, but please use common sense when it comes to the time of day. If you call and I don’t answer, I can usually respond to voicemails fairly quickly.

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

Readings from *Ethical Intuitionism* are designated as EI. All other readings can be found on D2L.

- 8.29 Introduction to the course – no reading
- 8.31 EI: Analytical Contents, Preface, and Introduction

- 9.5 Van Cleve, “Necessity, Analyticity, and the *A Priori*,” p. 15-27
Ayer, “Critique of Ethics and Theology” p. 102-113
- 9.7 EI: §§ 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.8

- 9.12 Hume, excerpts
Moore, “The Nature of Moral Philosophy
EI: §§ 3.1, 3.2, 3.3
- 9.14 Plato, *Euthyphro* (excerpt)
EI: §§ 3.4, 3.5, 3.6
Antony, “Good Minus God”

- 9.19 EI: §§ 4.1
Heathwood, “Reductionism in Ethics” p. 1-5
- 9.21 Heathwood, “Reductionism in Ethics” the rest
Moore, *Principia Ethica* (excerpt)
EI: §§4.2

- 9.26 EI: §§4.4.1, 4.4.2, 4.5, 4.6
- 9.28 No class: Shane is away for a conference

- 10.3 Heathwood, “Could Morality Have a Source?”
Gronholz “Practical Reasons”
- 10.5 EI: §§5.1-5.4

- 10.10 Mackie, “The Subjectivity of Values”
EI: 5.5, 5.6
- 10.12 EI: Chapter 6

- 10.17 No new reading, finish chapter 6 and metaethics wrap-up
- 10.19 **Midterm exam**

- 10.24 Introduction to normative ethics (not a reading – just what we’ll be doing)
Mill: *Utilitarianism* (selections)
- 10.26 Feldman, “What is Act Utilitarianism?”
First paper due

- 10.31 Feldman, “Problems of Act Utilitarianism
- 11.2 Smart, “Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism
Feldman, “Rule Utilitarianism” p. 61-67

- 11.7 Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysic of Morals* (probably just preface and chapters 1 and 2)
- 11.9 Kant, continued – no new reading
- 11.14 Tannsjo, “Moral Rights”
- 11.16 Ross, “What Makes Right Acts Right?”

Fall break 11.20-11.24

- 11.28 Tiberius, “Prudential Value”
- 11.30 Heathwood, “Faring Well and Getting What You Want”
- 12.5 Wolf, “Moral Saints”
- 12.7 Stroud, “Moral Overridingness and Moral Theory”
- 12.12 Huemer, “Values and Morals”
- 12.14 Gronholz, “Moral Reasons as Other-regarding Reasons,” “Seedy Behaviors,” “Moral Obligation”

Final Exam and paper: TBA

Fine Print

Honor Code

All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to [the academic integrity policy](#). Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, resubmission, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code Council as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

Accommodations for Disabilities

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability](#)

[Services website \(www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/students\)](http://www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices/students). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website and discuss your needs with your professor.

Religious Observances

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Please let me know well in advance about any such conflicts, and we'll work together to resolve them. See campus policy regarding religious observances for full details.

Classroom Behavior

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 race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

Discrimination And Harassment

We at the University of Colorado Boulder are committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this CU-Boulder policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSC) at 303-492-5550. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be found at the OIEC website. The full policy on discrimination and harassment contains additional information.