

PHIL 1100: Introduction to Ethics

Spring 2012

TR 5:00pm-6:15pm, HLMS 137

Syllabus

Instructor

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Office Hours: TR 1:45pm-3:15pm
Buchanan's Coffee (on the hill)

What Is This Class About?

This is an ethics class, designed to give you a basic understanding of the sorts of things that contemporary moral philosophers are thinking about. At the same time, the course should give you some of the tools that you will need in order to think critically, be rational, better argue for what you believe, and investigate the question of how to live morally. The course is divided into four sections:

First Unit: Ethical Theories. Are there such things as good, bad, right, and wrong? Do we decide these things for ourselves, or are they already decided for us? Can there be morality if God doesn't exist? Does morality merely concern the consequences of my actions, or do the actions themselves matter too? You're about to find out.

Second Unit: Ordinary Morality. Most people answer the questions above in the same way. We'll examine that "ordinary" view at length. What is the view? Is it a coherent view? How do we know it is correct? Is this sort of knowledge reliable? Are we free to act morally or immorally? Is it fair to morally judge people based on this (or any) moral system?

Third Unit: Applied Ethics. Here we will tackle some specific ethical issues directly. Namely, we will ask whether it is morally ok for you to abort a fetus, eat an animal, refrain from donating to charities, torture and kill criminals, or use illegal drugs.

Required Text

The Right Thing To Do, edited by James Rachels and Stuart Rachels
5th edition, 2010, McGraw-Hill Publishers; ISBN: 9780073407401

Required readings not found in The Right Thing To Do (RTD) will be posted under "Assigned Readings" as .pdf files on the course website, here:
<http://rintintin.colorado.edu/~vancecd/phil1100/phil1100.html>

Course Requirements

1. Exams (50%). You will take a mid-term exam and a final exam (25% each).
2. Papers (30%). You will write two papers. The first (10%) will be a short diagnostic paper, 450-750 words (i.e., about 2 pages), and the second (20%) will be a longer paper, 900-1500 words in length (i.e., 3 - 5 pages). Topics and more info: TBA.
3. Quizzes (10%). You will take a total of 11 short reading quizzes. Your lowest quiz score will be dropped; i.e., your 10 best scores will constitute your quiz grade (1% each).
4. Participation (10%). A portion of your grade will depend on your ability to come to class (on time and prepared), participate in class discussion, and refrain from being disruptive, falling asleep, sending text messages, or surfing the internet.

Course Policies

Academic Integrity

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 www.honorcode.colorado.edu/about-honor-code/definitions

Anyone caught violating the academic integrity policy (in any way) will automatically receive an F for this course, and may be subject to expulsion from the university.

Disability Services

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 be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and colorado.edu/disabilityservices.

Religious Observances

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. Please let me know well in advance about any such conflicts, so we can resolve them. For more information, see colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html.

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. See policies at colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html.

Discrimination and Harassment

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, staff, or faculty member who believes s/he 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 campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at colorado.edu/odh.

Below is a schedule of what topics we will cover, and what reading(s) you should complete for each class meeting. Page numbers for the readings found in our textbook (RTD) are in parenthesis. Readings not found in the text are marked: (pdf). Please note the due dates for the papers, and the exam dates.

Unit One	Theories of Morality	
Week 1		
Tue 1/17	Intro/Syllabus/Logic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachels, "Arguments" (RTD: 20-22)
Thurs 1/19	Relativism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" (pdf)
Week 2		
Tue 1/24	Nihilism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mackie, "Subjectivity of Values" (RTD: 56-60)¹ • Huemer, "Ethical Intuitionism" (pdf: 5.1 & 5.5)
Thurs 1/26	Divine Command Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachels, "Divine Commands" (RTD: 3-5)² • Plato, "Euthyphro" excerpt (pdf)
Week 3		
Tue 1/31	Divine Command Theory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shafer-Landau, "Does Ethical Objectivity Require God?" (pdf) • Watch the Craig vs. Antony debate: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9n0lqWPaluM
Thurs 2/2	Utilitarianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachels, "Introduction" (RTD: 12-16)³ • Mill, "Utilitarianism" (RTD: 30-33)⁴
Week 4		
Tue 2/7	Objections to Utilitarianism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachels, "Debate Over Utilitarianism" (pdf) • Nozick, "Experience Machine" (RTD: 46-48)
Thurs 2/9	Review: Unit One Exam	No new readings
Week 5		
Tue 2/14	EXAM: UNIT ONE	No new readings

¹ Read only the final 2 sections, entitled "The Argument From Relativity" and "The Argument From Queerness."

² Read only the section entitled "Divine Commands."

³ Read only the sections entitled "Utilitarianism" and "Impartiality."

⁴ Start at the beginning of section II (pg. 30) and stop (pg. 33) at the paragraph that begins "It may be objected..."

Unit Two	Ordinary Morality	
Week 5		
Thurs 2/16	Deontology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kant, "Categorical Imperative" (RTD: 61-66) • Ross, "What Makes Right Actions Right?" (pdf)⁵
Week 6		
Tue 2/21	The Doctrine of Double Effect (DDE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foot, "Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect" (pdf)⁶
Thurs 2/23	Objections to DDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norcross, "The Road to Hell" excerpt (pdf)
Week 7		
Tue 2/28	The Doctrine of Doing and Allowing (DDA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foot, "Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect" (pdf)⁷ • Thomson, "Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem" (pdf)⁸
Thurs 3/1	Objections to DDA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rachels, "Active/Passive Euthanasia" (pdf) • Thomson, "Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem" (pdf)⁹
Week 8		
Tue 3/6	Ethical Intuitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huemer, "Ethical Intuitionism" (pdf: 5.1-5.3) • Greene, "An FMRI Investigation" (pdf)
Thurs 3/8	Free Will	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holbach, "The Illusion of Free Will" (pdf)
Week 9		
Tue 3/13	Moral Luck	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nagel, "Moral Luck" (pdf)

⁵ Start on page 17 with the paragraph that begins, "Not only is this theory..." and stop on page 22 at the end of the paragraph that ends "makes a vast difference."

- Start again on page 29 with the paragraph that begins, "Something should be said..." and stop on page 41 at the end of the paragraph that ends "contradictions they may contain."

⁶ Start on the bottom of page 5 with the paragraph that begins, "The doctrine of double effect..." and stop on page 10 at the end of the paragraph that ends "we do not."

⁷ Start on page 10 where you left off, and stop on page 14 at the end of the paragraph that ends "evil must always be our guide."

⁸ Start at the beginning on page 204 and stop at the top of page 210 at the end of the paragraph that ends "saves more lives than we would do if we did not act."

⁹ Review pages 204-205.

Unit Three	Applied Ethics	
Week 9		
Thurs 3/15	Well-Being DUE: PAPER #1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parfit, "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best?" (pdf)
Week 10		
Tue 3/20	Cloning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kass, "Preventing A Brave New World" (pdf)
Thurs 3/22	Non-Identity Problem	No new readings
Spring Break		
3/26-3/30	Spring Break	No new readings
Week 11		
Tue 4/3	Famine Relief (against)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardin, "Lifeboat Ethics" (pdf) • Patton, "Game Preserve Ethics" (pdf)
Thurs 4/5	Famine Relief (for)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engel, "9/11 and Starvation" (RTD: 151-153) • Singer, "The Singer Solution to World Poverty" (RTD: 154-160)
Week 12		
Tue 4/10	Abortion (against)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral" (RTD: 85-91)
Thurs 4/12	Abortion (for)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" (RTD: 92-108)
Week 13		
Tue 4/17	Animal Rights (against)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohen, "The Case for the Use of Animals" (pdf)
Thurs 4/19	Animal Rights (for)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norcross, "Torturing Puppies and Eating Meat" (RTD: 130-137)
Week 14		
Tue 4/24	Torture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luban, "Liberalism, Torture, and the Ticking Bomb" (RTD: 189-202)
Thurs 4/26	Death Penalty DUE: PAPER #2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pojman, "A Defense of the Death Penalty" (RTD: 203-210)
Week 15		
Tue 5/1	Drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Huemer, "America's Unjust Drug War" (RTD: 223-236)
Thurs 5/3	Review: Unit Three Exam	No new readings
Tue 5/8	UNIT THREE EXAM	7:30pm-10:00pm