

# Ethical Theory

**Units** 9.0  
**Time** Monday, Wednesday: 2:30–3:50AM  
**Location** CMUQ 1190

**Instructor** Professor David Emmanuel Gray  
**Contact** CMUQ 1039, [degray@qatar.cmu.edu](mailto:degray@qatar.cmu.edu)  
**Office hours** Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: 8:00–10:00AM

## Course Overview

### Description

Every day, even in very subtle ways, we make judgments of value that shape our lives and our conduct. Ethics is the branch of philosophy that attempts to provide a systematic account of the source and nature of moral value, its relationship to other kinds of value, and the practical implications of accepting a given conception of morality. As such, ethics is ultimately concerned with the most fundamental of questions: “What ought I do?”

In this course, we examine attempts to answer this practical question while also developing a framework that allows us to articulate the specific sources of disagreement that distinguish competing moral theories. To that end, we begin the course by using Shelly Kagan’s analysis of normative ethics to develop a taxonomy that will facilitate our ability to adjudicate between moral theories on a reasoned basis. We then proceed through an analysis of the three most influential theories from the Western intellectual tradition: the utilitarianism of John Stuart Mill, the deontological theory of Immanuel Kant, and the virtue ethics of Aristotle. By the end of the semester, you should better understand and express your own convictions on difficult moral issues.

### Readings

The following are the required textbooks for the course:

- Shelly Kagan. *Normative Ethics*. Westview Press. 1998.
- John Stuart Mill. *Utilitarianism and On Liberty*, edited by Mary Warnock. Blackwell Publishing. 2003.
- Immanuel Kant. *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, edited by Mary Gregor. Cambridge University Press. 1997.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, edited by Sarah Broadie and Christopher Rowe. Oxford University Press. 2002.

You are expected to read the material according to the class schedule.

### Objectives

By the end of this term, I expect that you will be able to:

- Assess competing claims concerning the demands that morality place on a person’s actions and decisions,
- Form considered positions concerning what you judge to be the most defensible account of morality, and
- Communicate your analysis of these issues through both verbal and written discourse.

I have designed each course requirement with these objectives in mind.

### Announcements and Other Communication

I will post important information on the course webpage, so please routinely check for updates at

<http://www.andrew.cmu.edu/user/degray/ethics/>

Otherwise, I am glad to answer your questions, discuss your work, or respond to you concerns. Please see me at my office hours or get in touch via email.

### Submitting Assignments

To encourage proper citation of sources, all papers must be submitted to [www.TurnItIn.com](http://www.TurnItIn.com). Please refer to page 5 for more information about my academic integrity policy, and see page 6 for how to set up your TurnItIn account and submit your papers through it.

### Requirements and Grading

Philosophy is a full-contact sport, but conducted as a cooperative process. Together we wrestle with arguments and not attack those advocating them. Classes will typically follow a seminar format, driven by classroom discussions of the readings and the arguments they contain. As a result, the quality of the course depends critically on your individual attention and participation. The purpose of us coming together as a class is to learn and engage in philosophical activity as a group.

I strongly encourage you to discuss the course’s material outside of class with your fellow classmates, friends, and family, as well as with myself. However, all your work must be done independently, unless otherwise noted. You are expected to be familiar with the university policies on cheating and plagiarism. If you have any questions, please ask; do not assume.

**Assignments** include 2 short analytic summaries, 1 short position paper, and 3 analytic essays. Please refer to page 2 for details.

The total points will vary from assignment to assignment. However, each is ultimately scaled to a score from 0 to 5. Unless you are notified of otherwise, the grading distribution will be as follows:

4.00–5.00	A	2.00–2.99	C	0.00–0.99	R
3.00–3.99	B	1.00–1.99	D		

Your final course grade will be on the same 5-point scale, with each assignment weighted as indicated on page 2. (The wise student will realize that using this scale provides you with opportunities to recover if you do poorly on an assignment or two.)

If during the semester you wish to know how you are currently doing in more specific terms than what you can infer from this information, do not hesitate to meet with me. Please note, however: due to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regulations, *I will not transmit grade information over email*. All discussion of grades must be done face-to-face with me.

### Late Policy / Absence Policy

I do not accept late assignment submissions, and you get *no* “free” absences in this class. There are only two exceptions to this:

1. You and I agree on a reasonable accommodation *prior* to either the original due date or the date you are missing class, or
2. You provide me with a signed letter from the Dean of Academic Affairs justifying why it is permissible for you to turn in the assignment late or to be absent from class.

I recognize that these are extremely demanding requirements. *If you do not feel that you can meet them, please enroll in another course.*

### Participation and Attendance

Every class meeting will involve all of us actively *doing* philosophy, rather than passively absorbing what others may say about philosophical issues. As such, attendance and participation are very important. I expect you to show up to class on time, participate thoughtfully, ask questions when you are confused, take notes, and have a grasp of what was accomplished in each meeting. *Attendance is therefore required without exception, and anyone showing up more than 10 minutes late will be politely asked to leave and come back (on time) to our next class meeting.* To enforce this policy, I will promptly take attendance at 2:30PM. If you arrive after I have called your name, then you will be marked as tardy. Please refer to page 2 for details.

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# Assignments

## Reading

Most days of class will have an assigned reading (see the schedule on pages 3 and 4) that you will be expected to have read and thought about *before* class. This will allow us to devote our time to discussing and assessing the texts rather than simply reviewing their contents. Hence, you need to do more than merely peruse the readings: you must endeavor to understand what they are trying to convey. Keep in mind that reading philosophy is not like reading a novel or a textbook. There will be times when you have to read slowly and carefully. Sometimes you may have to stop and think about things; and you should be prepared to go back and reread if necessary. In some cases, multiple readings of the text may be necessary. I highly recommend taking notes while you read, so that you can remember the text's main points. Finally, feel free to bring questions about the reading to class.

## Participation (10% of Final Grade)

Your base participation grade will be on the 5-point scale from page 1, and it will consist of your overall grade on all graded assignments. For example, if the weighted average of your grades on papers is an 3.57, then your base participation grade is also an 3.57, or a B. Calculating your base participation grade can be done with a calculator. The formula is as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Base Participation Grade} = & [( \text{Analytical Summary \#1 Grade} \times 0.10 ) + \\ & ( \text{Analytical Summary \#2 Grade} \times 0.10 ) + \\ & ( \text{Position Paper Grade} \times 0.10 ) + \\ & ( \text{Analytical Essay \#1 Grade} \times 0.20 ) + \\ & ( \text{Analytical Essay \#2 Grade} \times 0.20 ) + \\ & ( \text{Analytical Essay \#3 Grade} \times 0.20 ) ] \div \\ & 0.90. \end{aligned}$$

At the end of the semester, I will calculate your base participation grade this way. After that, I will then take into consideration the items below in order to raise or lower this grade.

**Absences, tardy arrivals, and distracting behavior** impact your participation grade in the following ways: each class absence will lower your participation grade by 1.0 point (one letter grade), while each time you are tardy will lower it by 0.5 points (one-half letter grade). Being caught sleeping in class, chatting with the person sitting next to you, using your cell phone, leaving the classroom, or similar behavior will be treated as an absence or as tardiness depending on the particulars of the circumstances.

**Active and productive class participation**, on the other hand, boosts your participation grade by up to 2.0 points (two letter grades). Also, if you have perfect attendance with no tardy arrivals, your participation grade will be automatically boosted an additional 1.0 point (one letter grade).

Note that it is possible that your participation grade can go negative because of penalties. On the other hand, it is also possible that your participation grade could go well above 5.0 points. Strive for the latter!

## Analytic Summaries (20% of Final Grade)

There will be two analytic summaries, each of which will count for 10% towards your final course grade. Each consists of a brief (about 700 words, or around 2 pages) summary of an argument presented in the reading, but without providing any critically commentary of that argument. These summaries will be due the day *before* we discuss the argument in question together in class. The purpose of these analytical summaries is to practice taking a longer argument and condensing it down to a concise statement of (1) the main conclusion, (2) the set of premises, reasons, or evidence that are offered as support for that conclusion, and (3) how those premises are supposed to support or otherwise entail the conclusion. More details, including a grading rubric, will be provided in class.


## Position Paper (10% of Final Grade)

There will be one position paper, which will count for 10% towards your final course grade. It will consist of a brief (about 700 words, or around 2 pages) argument supporting a particular claim or conclusion. The purpose of this paper is to practice building a reasoned argument in support of a position of your own on a given issue that we have discussed in class. In this paper, you are asked to (1) state concisely your central claim and then (2) demonstrate how this conclusion is supported or entailed by premises, reasons, and/or evidence that are plausible in their own right or difficulty to deny. More details, including a grading rubric, will be provided in class.

## Analytic Essays (60% of Final Grade)

There will be three analytic essays, each of which will count for 20% towards your final course grade. Each consists of a more extended analysis (1,800 words, or around 5 pages) of an issue raised by the reading and covered in class. The purpose of these essays is to demonstrate your ability to (1) reconstruct and critically evaluate important philosophical arguments and (2) to construct a reasoned argument in support of a considered position or claim. As such, these essays combine the skills you will employ when doing your analytical summaries and position paper. More details, including grading rubrics, will be provided in class.

# Schedule

wk	Date	Topic/Readings	# Pages	Assignments
1	9/3 (Mon)	<b>Introduction</b>		Topic for analytic summary #1 handed out.
	9/5 (Wed)	<b>Concepts in Normative Ethics (Unit #1)</b> <i>Normative Ethics</i> , chapter 1.	22	
2	9/9 (Sun)			Analytic summary #1 due by 12:00PM (noon) via TurnItIn.
	9/10 (Mon)	<b>Concepts in Normative Ethics</b> <i>Normative Ethics</i> , chapter 2.1–2.2.	17	
	9/12 (Wed)	<b>Concepts in Normative Ethics</b> <i>Normative Ethics</i> , chapter 2.3–2.6.	29	
3	9/17 (Mon)	<b>Concepts in Normative Ethics</b> <i>Normative Ethics</i> , chapter 3.1–3.3.	25	Topic for analytic summary #2 handed out.
	9/19 (Wed)	<b>Concepts in Normative Ethics</b> <i>Normative Ethics</i> , chapter 3.4–3.5.	12	
4	9/23 (Sun)			Analytic summary #2 due by 12:00PM (noon) via TurnItIn.
	9/24 (Mon)	<b>Concepts in Normative Ethics</b> <i>Normative Ethics</i> , chapter 5.1–5.2.	18	
	9/26 (Wed)	<b>Concepts in Normative Ethics</b> <i>Normative Ethics</i> , chapter 5.3–5.4.	17	
5	10/1 (Mon)	<b>Concepts in Normative Ethics</b> <i>Normative Ethics</i> , chapter 6.1–6.3.	24	Topic for position paper handed out.
	10/3 (Wed)	<b>Concepts in Normative Ethics</b> <i>Normative Ethics</i> , chapter 6.4–6.5.	28	
6	10/7 (Sun)			Position paper due by 12:00PM (noon) via TurnItIn.
	10/8 (Mon)	<b>John Stuart Mill (Unit #2)</b> Jeremy Bentham, <i>An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation</i> , chapters 1 and 4 (pp. 17–22, 41–43 in <i>Utilitarianism and On Liberty</i> ).	9	
	10/10 (Wed)	<b>John Stuart Mill</b> <i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 181–202 in <i>Utilitarianism and On Liberty</i> ).	22	
7	10/15 (Mon)	<b>John Stuart Mill</b> <i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapter 3 (pp. 203–209 in <i>Utilitarianism and On Liberty</i> ).	7	
	10/17 (Wed)	<b>John Stuart Mill</b> <i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapter 4 (pp. 210–215 in <i>Utilitarianism and On Liberty</i> ).	6	
8	10/22 (Mon)	<b>John Stuart Mill</b> <i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapter 5 (pp. 216–235 in <i>Utilitarianism and On Liberty</i> ).	20	Topic for analytic essay #1 handed out.
	10/24 (Wed)	<b>John Stuart Mill</b> <i>On Liberty</i> , chapter 1 (pp. 88–98 in <i>Utilitarianism and On Liberty</i> ).	11	
	10/29, 31	 <b>Eid Al-Adha Break</b>		
9	11/5 (Mon)	<b>John Stuart Mill</b> <i>On Liberty</i> , chapter 2 (pp. 99–130 in <i>Utilitarianism and On Liberty</i> ).	32	
	11/7 (Wed)	<b>John Stuart Mill</b> <i>On Liberty</i> , chapter 3 (pp. 131–146 in <i>Utilitarianism and On Liberty</i> ).	16	

wk	Date	Topic/Readings	# Pages	Assignments
10	11/11 (Sun)			Analytic essay #1 due by 12:00PM (noon) via TurnItIn.
	11/12 (Mon)	<b>Immanuel Kant (Unit #3)</b> <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , editor's introduction (pp. vii–xii), preface (pp. 1–6), and section I (pp. 7–10).	16	Topic for analytic essay #2 handed out.
	11/14 (Wed)	<b>Immanuel Kant</b> <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , editor's introduction (pp. xii–xv) and section I (pp. 10–18).	13	
11	11/19 (Mon)	<b>Immanuel Kant</b> <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , editor's introduction (pp. xv–xxi) and section II (pp. 19–34).	23	
	11/21 (Wed)	<b>Immanuel Kant</b> <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , editor's introduction (pp. xxi–xxv) and section I (pp. 34–46).	18	
12	11/26 (Mon)	<b>Immanuel Kant</b> <i>Normative Ethics</i> , chapter 7.1–7.2.	32	
	11/28 (Wed)	<b>Immanuel Kant</b> <i>Normative Ethics</i> , chapter 7.4–7.5.	20	
13	12/2 (Sun)			Analytic essay #2 due by 12:00PM (noon) via TurnItIn.
	12/3 (Mon)	<b>Aristotle (Unit #4)</b> <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book I (pp. 95–110).	16	Topic for analytic essay #3 handed out.
	12/5 (Wed)	<b>Aristotle</b> <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book II (pp. 111–122) and book III.6–III.12 (pp. 132–141).	22	
14	12/10 (Mon)	<b>Aristotle</b> <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book VI (pp. 176–189).	13	
	12/12 (Wed)	<b>Aristotle</b> <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book III.1–III.5 (pp. 122–132) and book VII.1–VII.10 (pp. 189–203).	26	
	12/19 (Wed)			Analytic essay #3 due by 12:00PM (noon) via TurnItIn.

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# Policies

## Reasonable Accommodations

I recognize that you are a human being with occasional human problems associated with human finitude. Illness, family emergencies, job interviews, other professors, etc. . . will inevitably lead to legitimate conflicts over your time. If you expect that you will be missing class or be unable to turn in an assignment on time, please notify me (either in class or via email) *in advance* and we can agree on a reasonable accommodation. Please recognize that most reasonable accommodations will still carry a penalty: your grade on the assignment may be reduced (since you will be given more time than your classmates), or you may have to do additional work not required of your classmates. So when proposing a reasonable accommodation be prepared to state what you take to be a fair penalty for that accommodation. I will then decide whether to accept or reject your proposal. Any arrangements after the fact require a signed letter from the Dean of Academic Affairs.

## Challenging an Assignment Grade

Please recognize that I am human also: mistakes may occasionally occur when grading your assignments. Therefore, you have *one week* after an assignment is handed back to challenge its grade. To do so, you must return the assignment to me along with a clearly written explanation of your reason for challenging its grade. I will promptly and seriously consider all such requests and meet with you, if necessary, to resolve them. Assignments without a written explanation with not be considered. After one week, no challenges will be accepted. Of course, if you are not satisfied with your grade, but recognize that it was not due to a fault in the grading, I encourage you to talk with me to learn how to improve on future assignments.

## Students with Disabilities

In compliance with university policy and equal access laws, I am available to discuss appropriate academic accommodations that you may require as a student with a disability. Request for academic accommodations should be made during the first week of the term, except for unusual circumstances, so arrangements can be made. Students are required to register for disability verification and for determination of reasonable academic accommodations. For more information, visit

<http://www.cmu.edu/hr/eos/disability/students/index.html>

## Sexual Harassment Policy

It is the policy of the university that no male or female member of the university community (i.e., students, faculty, administrators, or staff) may sexually harass any other member of the community. Sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made or threatened to be made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of an individual's employment or education; or
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used or threatened to be used as the basis for academic or employment decisions affecting that individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's academic or professional performance or creating what a reasonable person would sense as an intimidating, hostile, or offensive employment, educational, or living environment.

For more information, visit

<http://www.cmu.edu/policies/documents/SexHarass.html>

## A Note on Classroom Courtesy

Class begins promptly at 2:30PM. You are expected to be seated by that time and to remain seated until the class is dismissed. If you must leave before the class ends because of a medical appointment, or similar commitment, notify me before class begins and sit near the door. Students who leave without providing such notice and have not suddenly taken ill will be expected to drop the course and not to return.

## Video Taping and Audio Recording

Your classmates and I have a reasonable expectation to not be recorded in this course. Therefore, videotaping and audio recording are prohibited without our expressed, unanimous permission.

## Cell Phones, Laptops, and Related Technologies

Student interactions with portable technology devices can harm the dynamics of the classroom. Therefore, I expect you to silence your cell phones prior to class and to not text-message during class. *All laptops should be closed unless you have made prior arrangements with me and have demonstrated that using a laptop is necessary for your learning.*

## Academic Integrity

Academic integrity is embodied by commitments to honesty, respect, trust, diligence, and rigor in the pursuit of knowledge. As a student in this class, academic integrity means following all directions on assignments, clearly distinguishing your own original work from the work done by others in your papers, and seeking help whenever you feel that you are struggling.

In this class, typical violations of academic integrity involve plagiarism. Examples of this include cutting-and-pasting material from the Internet without proper citation, paraphrasing material from external sources without attribution, and copying ideas from a classmate without reference. To avoid this, you must strive for clarity in your writing in order to distinguish between when you are presenting your own ideas (typically by using the pronoun "I") and when you are presenting someone else's ideas (by properly citing the source). Keep in mind, this includes the ideas of your classmates: if a classmate says something that you want to use in your own paper, then you should simply cite it, for instance, as "from a conversation with X".

In general, proper citation lets me know what it is I am evaluating about your writing. Am I evaluating your own original ideas? or am I evaluating your presentation of someone else's ideas? or am I evaluating you expanding on someone else's ideas? All of these tasks are important in philosophy, so do not be ashamed when you are doing them. I honestly do not expect every single thing you write to be uniquely yours, but I do expect you to be clear and honest about what it is you are doing in your papers.

While I treat violations of academic integrity on a case-by-case basis, there are some basic patterns I follow. When I suspect a violation, I will first meet with the student for an explanation. If I remain convinced that there is a violation, I will write a letter to the Dean of Academic Affairs indicating that the student in question submitted plagiarized material. Beyond that, I typically impose a penalty that exceeds the penalty of not having done the assignment at all. For instance, the penalty for plagiarizing a paper is worse than for not having written a paper at all. Plagiarism is also a violation of the community standards at Carnegie Mellon University. As such, there may be further penalties imposed by a University Academic Review Board. For more information, see the section on "University Policies" in the most recent edition of *The Q Word: Undergraduate Student Handbook & Planner*.

If you ever find yourself tempted to violate these standards of academic integrity, please find an alternative course of action! Email me for a reasonable accommodation, or turn in partially completed work. I assure you that the impact on you will be far gentler in these ways.

# Using TurnItIn

## Setting Up Your TurnItIn Account

For this course, I will be using TurnItIn to assist me in verifying that each of your papers is an original piece of scholarly work. For those of you not familiar with this website, you submit a copy of each of your papers to it, and TurnItIn examines your work against its database of papers and websites. This allows me to quickly confirm that you are correctly citing your sources. I will then print your papers myself, so you do *not* need to hand in any hardcopies to me.

Before you can turn anything in, you must set up an account on TurnItIn and get it connected to this course. This is a relatively painless process so do not be scared. If computers frighten you, find a classmate who may help you set up your account.

Regardless, follow these simple instructions in order to begin your journey on the path of originality:

1. Get a computer with Internet access.
2. Open up a web browser and go to: <http://www.TurnItIn.com>.
3. You may be asked to select your language. If so, please click on [English \(US\)](#). (Beyond English, I am familiar with Ancient Greek and Latin, neither of which is useful for guaranteeing that these instructions work for any of the site's other supported languages.)
4. Now look towards the top right of the webpage and click on [Create Account](#).
5. On the next screen, look for the section entitled "Create a New Account". In that section, click on [student](#).
6. On the next screen, enter the following information:

class ID:	5412609
class enrollment password:	plato

Enter your (real) first and last name, along with your *university* email address (or whatever email address you actually check).

Make up a password (and *write it down!* No seriously, write it down *right now!* Just write it here: \_\_\_\_\_) and enter it into the two fields.

Select a secret question from the pull down menu and then type the answer in the space provided.

Unless you are a child prodigy, please tick the circle next to "I am at least 13 years of age".

Finally, read and understand the license agreement, or (like me) just skip it and click the "I agree -- create profile" button.

7. On the next screen it should say you are now setup and enrolled in my class. And so you are done. Ignore the instructions it gives you. You do not need to turn anything in right now—unless, of course, you put this off until the first paper was due!

## Turning It In with TurnItIn

Now that you have set up your TurnItIn account, you are now ready to submit your highly original papers. Please note that you are expected to submit all papers via the TurnItIn website *before* their respective due date/time in order to avoid a late penalty. The website is set to stop accepting papers after that time. Turning in a hardcopy in class is not required as long as the paper has been successfully submitted to TurnItIn.

In order to turn in your first assignment, please follow these instructions:

1. Finish the assignment. Make sure it is all in a *single* text file (acceptable formats are MS Word, WordPerfect, PostScript, PDF, HTML, RTF, and plain text) on a computer.
2. Find a computer with Internet access and put your paper's file on it.
3. Open up a web browser and go to: <http://www.TurnItIn.com>.
4. You may be asked to "Select your language". If so, please click on [English \(US\)](#). (See previous instructions for my esoteric knowledge of foreign languages.)
5. Look towards the top right of the webpage and enter your email address and password (which you had better have written down) and then click on the "SIGN IN" button.
6. On the next screen, click on [Ethical Theory](#).
7. On the next screen, click the "Submit" button next to the name of the assignment you wish to turn in.
8. On the next screen, select "single file upload" from the pull down menu. Do *not* use "cut & paste upload", as it will remove all your document's precious formatting!  
Your first and last name should already be filled in.  
For the submission title enter "My Assignment" (or "Plato Approved" or something else witty and clever).  
Then click the "Choose File" button to find the location of the assignment's file on the computer.  
Finally, click the "upload" button and wait patiently until your file has indeed been uploaded.
9. On the next screen, make sure this is the file you wish to submit and then click the "submit" button.
10. On the next screen, it should that your submission was successful. Now you are almost done. Please *save a copy* of this "TurnItIn Digital Receipt" so that, in case anything goes wrong, I can verify that you turned it in on time. It is *your responsibility* to do this. Failure to do so means that you will not be absolved of any late penalties. Now you are really done. Congratulations.

### Problems Submitting Your Paper?

If any problems occur when trying to submit, please email a copy of your assignment to me *before* the posted date and time that the assignment is due. I can then submit the paper for you. If you cannot do this, then you must submit a hardcopy to me personally to avoid a late penalty (and I must actually have the paper in hand before the due date/time).