

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

PHIL 242, FALL 2009

GENERAL COURSE INFORMATION

Time: Monday and Wednesday 12:30–2:00 PM

Room: CMUQ 1213

INSTRUCTOR

Name: David Emmanuel Gray

Office: CMUQ 1039

Email: d-gray@northwestern.edu

Office Hours: Sunday 8:30–9:20 AM, 10:30–11:20 AM

Monday 9:30–11:30 AM

Tuesday 8:30–9:20 AM, 10:30–11:20 AM

Wednesday 9:30–11:30 AM

Thursday 8:30–9:20 AM, 10:30–11:20 AM

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES

Important course information will be posted on the Blackboard for this class on the web. Please routinely check for updates at:

<http://courses.northwestern.edu/>

REQUIRED TEXTS

- James Rachels. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy (EMP)*. Fourth Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003.
- James Rachels and Stuart Rachels. *The Right Thing to Do: Basic Readings in Moral Philosophy (TRTTD)*. Fifth Edition. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2009.

Additional readings will be made available in PDF format on Blackboard.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course provides an introduction to ethics, the branch of philosophy exploring the nature of morality, good and evil, and right and wrong action. Socrates, the first great moral philosopher, emphasizes that ethics addresses the most pressing issues of human life, for it is about how we should live and the sort of people we should strive to become. In studying ethics, we will look at several influential attempts to answer the most practical of questions: “What ought I to do?” Throughout, we will discover how the contestations between these answers frame most present-day debates concerning controversies such as cloning, world poverty, animal rights, torture, the conduct of nations during wartime, and responses to terrorism. With an emphasis on both theory and practice, we shall witness not only how moral theory informs our practices, but also how these practices inform the theories. Class discussions and assigned work will encourage the students to present and critically examine their own views as well as those of others.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

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

- Understand the moral arguments that we cover in class,
- Critically evaluate these arguments,
- Construct your own arguments on these issues, and
- Communicate all the above through both verbal and written discourse.

Each course requirement is designed with these objectives in mind.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

| | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Journal Assignments | = 30% |
| Analytical Analyses | = 20% (2 @ 10% each) |
| Critical Position Papers | = 40% (2 @ 20% each) |
| Class Participation | = 10% |

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 an interactive lecture format, with a certain amount of time set aside for seminar-style discussions. As a result, the quality of the course depends critically on the quality of each individual's attention and participation. The purpose of us coming together as a class is to engage in philosophical activity together.

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

GRADING SCALE

Each assignment will be graded on a 100 point scale. Unless you are notified of otherwise, the grading distribution will be as follows:

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------|----|-----------|----|-----------|----|--------|---|
| 92.6–100 | A | 82.6–89.9 | B | 72.6–79.9 | C | 0–59.9 | F |
| 90–92.5 | A- | 80–82.5 | B- | 70–72.5 | C- | | |
| 87.5–89.9 | B+ | 77.5–79.9 | C+ | 60–69.9 | D | | |

Your final course grade will be on the same 100 point scale, with each assignment weighted as indicated in the course requirements section above.

COURSE SCHEDULE

INTRODUCTION – ETHICS AND ARGUMENTATION

August 24: Course Introduction.

August 26: James Rachels, "Some Basic Points About Arguments" (*TRTTD*), pp. 20–22.
Irving M. Copi and Carl Cohen, "Propositions and Arguments" (handout).

August 31: Matt Ridley, “The New Eugenics” (*TRTTD*).

September 2: Douglas Husak, “The Immorality of SUVs and Trucks” (handout).

First analytical analysis topic assigned.

UNIT I – ON WHAT IS MORALITY GROUNDED?

September 7: Ruth Benedict, “Anthropology and the Abnormal” (handout).

James Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” (*EMP*).

First analytical analysis due by 11:59 PM via TurnItIn.

September 9: David Hume, “Morality as Based on Sentiment” (handout).

James Rachels, “Subjectivism in Ethics” (*EMP*).

September 14: Plato, *Euthyphro* (handout).

James Rachels, “Does Morality Depend on Religion?”, sections 4.1 and 4.2 (*EMP*).

September 16: Norman Kretzmann, “Abraham, Isaac, and Euthyphro: God and the Basis of Morality” (handout).

Second analytical analysis topic assigned.

September 21: No Class.

September 23: No Class.

September 28: Aristotle, “The Doctrine of the Four Causes” (handout).

Saint Thomas Aquinas, “Ethics and Natural Law” (handout).

James Rachels, “Does Morality Depend on Religion?”, section 4.3 (*EMP*).

UNIT II – DO THE INTERESTS OF OTHERS MATTER?

September 30: Plato, “The Ring of Gyges” (handout).

James Rachels, “Psychological Egoism” (*EMP*).

October 5: Ayn Rand, “Value Yourself” (handout).

James Rachels, “Ethical Egoism” (*EMP*).

October 7: Peter Singer, “The Singer Solution to World Poverty” (*TRTTD*).

Garrett Hardin, “Lifeboat Ethics” (handout).

Second analytical analysis due by 11:59 PM via TurnItIn.

October 12: Jeremy Bentham, “The Principle of Utility” (handout).

James Rachels, “The Utilitarian Approach”, sections 7.1 and 7.2 (*EMP*).

Robert Nozick, “The Experience Machine” (*TRTTD*).

October 14: Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal” (*TRTTD*).

Tibor R. Machan, “Do Animals Have Rights?” (*TRTTD*).

First critical position paper topic assigned.

PART III – UTILITARIANISM AND ITS LIMITS

October 19: John Stuart Mill, “Utilitarianism” (*TRTTD*).

October 21: James Rachels, “The Debate Over Utilitarianism”, sections 8.3 and 8.4 (*EMP*).

E.F. Carritt, “Criticisms of Utilitarianism” (handout).

Bernard Williams, “Utilitarianism and Integrity” (*TRTTD*).

October 26: John Stuart Mill, “On the Connexion Between Justice and Utility” (handout).

James Rachels, “The Debate Over Utilitarianism”, section 8.5 (*EMP*).

October 28: Robert Nozick, “Side-Constraints” (handout).

November 2: Michael Walzer, “Political Action: The Problem of Dirty Hands” (handout).

PART IV – DEONTOLOGICAL APPROACHES

November 4: Immanuel Kant, “Duty, Imperatives, and Happiness” (handout).

James Rachels, “Are There Absolute Moral Rules?” sections 9.1 and 9.2 (*EMP*).

November 9: Immanuel Kant, “The Categorical Imperative” (handout).

James Rachels, “Are There Absolute Moral Rules?” sections 9.3, 9.4, and 9.5 (*EMP*).

James Rachels, “Kant and Respect for Persons”, section 10.1 (*EMP*).

First critical position paper due by 11:59 PM via TurnItIn.

November 11: Thomas Hobbes, “The Social Contract” (*TRTTD*).

James Rachels, “The Idea of a Social Contract” (*EMP*).

November 16: Michael Walzer, “Against ‘Realism’” (handout).

Second critical position paper topic assigned.

PART V – MORALITY BEYOND UNIVERSAL RULES AND PRINCIPLES

November 18: Virginia Held, “Caring Relations and Principles of Justice” (*TRTTD*).

James Rachels, “Feminism and the Ethics of Care” (*EMP*).

November 23: Aristotle, “The Virtues” (*TRTTD*).

James Rachels, “The Ethics of Virtue” (*EMP*).

November 25: Aristotle, “On Friendship” (handout).

November 30: No Class.

December 2: Martha Nussbaum, “Compassion and Terror” (handout).

December 7: Plato, “The Allegory of the Cave” (handout).

Voltaire, “The Good Brahmin” (handout).

December 13: **Second critical position paper due by 11:59 PM via TurnItIn.**

EXPLANATION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Reading: Each day of class will have an assigned reading (see the course schedule) that you will be expected to have read and thought about before class. This will allow us to devote more time to collaborate in understanding and assessing the arguments in these texts. Hence, you need to do more than merely peruse the readings: you must endeavor to understand the author’s position and how the author justifies it. In some cases, this may take multiple readings to accomplish. However, reading assignments are relatively short so that this is feasible. In addition, it is good to take notes while reading, so that you can remember the author’s main points. Finally, feel free to bring questions to class. This material is hardly obvious and, despite a tremendous amount of scholarship, it still challenges the most intelligent of people.

Journal Assignments: The journal assignments will help you become a more active reader of philosophy. At the **BEGINNING** (i.e., within the first five minutes) of a class for which new reading is being discussed, a short (1 typed page or 1–2 neatly handwritten pages, whichever you prefer) journal entry will be due concerning that reading. The point of this is to deepen your understanding of the reading, and prepare you to discuss it intelligently. Each entry should: (a) summarize the main ideas of the reading in your own words, and (b) respond to these ideas with observations, insights, questions and reflections of your own. Reading questions will be provided with each reading assignment that should give

you ideas for things to write about in your journal. Engage the readings closely and critically; explore the terrain of ideas in ways that deepen and enrich your thinking. Depending on your attitude, this will be either busy-work or the most rewarding part of the course—find a way to make it the latter, seeing me for help if necessary.

At the end of each course unit, your journal entries for that unit will be returned to you graded. This will give you an ongoing sense of how you are doing in the course and provide you with feedback on how to improve your future journal entries. Once a unit's journal entries are returned, you have one week to redo **ONE** of that unit's entries. This will give you the opportunity to earn up to half the points you originally missed on that entry.

Each of your journal entries will be assessed according to whether it (1) engages closely with the readings, (2) identifies the reading's main ideas, (3) poses questions and challenges to test the reading's claims, and (4) explores the ideas in interesting, thought-provoking ways. Each of your journals entries will be graded on a 100 point scale as follows:

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| 95 (A) | Consistently engages the readings with care. Picks out main ideas and expresses them succinctly. Raises interesting questions and objections. Inspired, stimulating read. |
| 85 (B) | Frequently reads and reflects with care. Usually identifies important ideas. Sometimes raises interesting points and questions. Inconsistently inspired. |
| 75 (C) | Distinct signs of careless or superficial reading. Often misses key ideas. Inconsistently critical. Bland, uninteresting, or uninspired. |
| 65 (D) or lower | Sloppy work with few signs of having engaged closely with the readings. Fails to use opportunity to extend and deepen thinking. |
| 0 | No entry submitted on time. |

Truly outstanding journal entries may receive a perfect 100 (A+). Your **THREE** lowest journal entries will be dropped and your overall journal grade will be based on the average grade of the remaining entries.

Analytical Analyses: There will be two analytical analyses, each of which will count for 10% of your final course grade. These will involve communicating, in your own words, the ideas we have studied. The first analysis will concern the presentation of just one argument. The second analysis will have you describe two opposing arguments on the same issue. In both cases you will explain arguments found in the reading, but not critically evaluate them. More details concerning each analysis will be announced and discussed in class.

Each analytic analysis will be graded on the 100 point scale, based on a traditional A–F scale with +/- gradations, according to the following distribution:

| | | | |
|---------|---------|---------|-----------------|
| A+ 100 | B+ 87.5 | C+ 77.5 | D 65 |
| A 95 | B 85 | C 75 | F 55 (or lower) |
| A- 92.5 | B- 82.5 | C- 72.5 | |

A grading rubric for each analysis will be posted.

Critical Position Papers: There will be two critical position papers, each of which will count for 20% of your final course grade. In the first of these, you will be asked to explain and then critically evaluate two opposing arguments on the same issue. In doing so, you will defend one of the arguments by providing it a reasoned defense of your own against the other one. In the second critical position paper, you will present a reasoned defense of a position of your own. More details concerning these papers will be announced and discussed in class. Critical position papers will be graded on the same 100 point scale as the analytical analyses. A grading rubric for each critical position paper will be posted.

Class Participation: Class attendance and participation are very important in understanding and retaining the class material. You are expected to participate thoughtfully, to take notes, and to have a grasp of what was accomplished in each meeting. Your base participation grade will consist of your overall grade on all graded assignments (e.g., if the weighted average of your journal assignments, analytical analyses, and critical position papers is a 87.5, then your base participation grade is also 87.5, or a B+). I recognize that not everybody is comfortable speaking in class, so only repeated class absences (or sleeping in class!) will lower your base participation grade. Active class participation, however, will increase it.

Films: If a quorum of at least two-thirds of the students is interested (and can, between themselves, agree on a time), I will show some films outside of class time that explore the subject matter we are covering in the course. You will not be required to attend these, but you can complete a journal entry to count as extra credit towards your overall journal grade.

REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS

I recognize that most students are human beings 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. Arrangements after the fact will only be made in extraordinary, documented circumstances.

CHALLENGING AN ASSIGNMENT GRADE

Please recognize that I am human also: mistakes will 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 challenges and meet with you, if necessary, to resolve them. Assignments without a written explanation will not be considered. After one week, no challenges will be accepted, except in extraordinary, documented circumstances. 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.

EXTRA CREDIT

Opportunities for extra credit will be provided at my discretion. If provided, extra credit will only count towards your overall journal assignment grade. If there are any community lectures, documentaries, television specials, news reports, web content, etc. . . on topics related to course material, please bring them to my attention. I may provide extra credit opportunities for the class based upon them.

A NOTE ON CLASSROOM COURTESY

Classes begin on the half-hour. Students 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 file a drop form 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, video taping and audio recording are prohibited without our expressed, unanimous permission.

CELL PHONES, LAPTOPS, AND OTHER 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.**

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.northwestern.edu/disability/>

CHEATING AND PLAGIARISM

plagiarism (plā'jĕ-rĭz'ĕm) *n* 1: a piece of writing that has been copied from someone else and is presented as being your own work. 2: the act of plagiarizing; taking someone's words or ideas as if they were your own.

Plagiarism is bad. Do not do it. It amounts to lying, cheating, and stealing. Anyone caught doing it can fairly assume that they will not pass this course. This is a course on ethics, after all!

To encourage proper citing of sources, www.turnitin.com will be used for submitting your assignments. Beyond this, it is the responsibility of each student to be aware of the university policies on academic integrity, including the policies on cheating and plagiarism. This information is available at <http://www.northwestern.edu/uacc/plagiar.html>

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

It is the policy of the university that no male or female member of the university community—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.northwestern.edu/sexual-harassment/policy/index.html>

SETTING UP YOUR TURNITIN ACCOUNT

PHIL 242 - INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

For this course your instructor will be using turnitin.com to check each of your papers for their originality. For each paper, you will be expected to submit a copy to turnitin (no hardcopies need be submitted). If you have trouble submitting please email a copy to your instructor BEFORE the posted time that the assignment is due.

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 don't be scared. 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, your instructor knows Ancient Greek and Latin, neither of which is useful for guaranteeing that these instructors work for any of the site's other supported languages.)
4. Look towards the top right of the webpage and click on NEW USERS CLICK HERE.
5. On the next screen, look for the section entitled "New students start here". Click on CREATE A USER PROFILE.
6. On the next screen, click on STUDENT from the choices.
7. On the next screen, enter the following information:

Turnitin class ID: **2813691**

Turnitin class enrollment password: **plato**

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

Make up a password (*and write it down! No serious, 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 field provided.

Finally, read and understand the license agreement, or (like your instructor) just skip it and click on I AGREE – CREATE PROFILE.


8. On the next screen it should say you are done. And so you are. Ignore the instructions it gives you—you do not need to turn anything in, unless, of course, you put this off until an assignment was due.

TURNING IT IN WITH TURNITIN

PHIL 242 - INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

Now that you have set up your turnitin account (see the previous handout on this), you are now ready to submit your highly original assignments. Please note that you are expected to submit all assignments via the turnitin website by their respective due date/time in order to avoid a late penalty. Turning in a hardcopy in class is not required as long as the assignment 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 somehow 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 handout for your instructor's 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 LOGIN.
6. On the next screen, click on 80-100 - INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS.
7. On the next screen, click on the submit icon () next to where it has the name of the assignment you wish to turn in.
8. On the next screen, select FILE UPLOAD from the pull down menu. Your first and last name should already be filled in. For SUBMISSION TITLE enter "My Assignment" (or "Plato Approved" or something else witty and clever). Then click the BROWSE... button to find the location of the assignment's file on the computer. Then click the SUBMIT button.
9. On the next screen, make sure this is the file you wish to submit and then click SUBMIT PAPER.
10. On the next screen it should that you are done. And yes you are. Almost. **PLEASE SAVE A COPY OF THIS** "Turnitin Digital Receipt" so that, in case anything goes wrong, we 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.

If any problems occur when trying to submit, please email a copy of your assignment to your instructor. He can then submit it for you. If you cannot do this before the due date/time, then you must submit a hardcopy at the instructor's office to avoid a late penalty (and your instructor must actually have the paper in hand before the due date/time).