

PHIL 2306: ETHICS

SECTION: 02

The University of Texas at El Paso

Semester: Spring 2015

Location: UGLC, Rm. 116

Times: Monday, Wednesday, 2:00-3:20 pm

INSTRUCTOR: DR. CAROLINE T. ARRUDA

Office Hours:

- Tuesdays, 2:00-4:00 pm
- Other times by appointment

Office: Worrell Hall, Room 306

E-mail: ctarruda@utep.edu

TEACHING ASSISTANT:

Allen McClendon:

- Office hours: Mondays, 10:00 am -1:00 pm
- Office: Worrell Hall, Room 109
- Email: agmcclendon@miners.utep.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Ethics, broadly understood, is a field in philosophy that seeks to answer the question “How ought I act?”. In this course, we will focus on four areas in ethics:

- First, we will examine work in **metaethics**, which seeks to answer questions about the very foundational concepts of ethics—such as whether there is truth in moral matters, what (if anything) counts as a good reason to act, among others.
- Second, we will consider arguments in **value theory**. Value theory investigates whether the things that we claim to be valuable—say, happiness—are in fact valuable and whether they ought play a role in determining how we ought act.
- Third, we will consider arguments in **normative ethics**, which seeks to answer the question of how we ought act. It does so by providing arguments about what criteria we use for determining morally required, permissible or prohibited actions. So, for example, should we always act to produce the most good for the largest number of people or are there instances in which doing so is morally unacceptable?
- Fourth, we will consider issues in **applied ethics**, such as whether we ought provide aid to starving populations or whether abortion is morally permissible. Here we will apply various theories in normative ethics to these and other questions.

Drawing on resources from both the history of philosophy and contemporary philosophy, we will consider the competing answers to the central questions of each of these subfields of ethics.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND GOALS:

- Students will become familiar with the central questions and arguments in metaethics, value theory, normative ethics and applied ethics. In particular:

- Students will gain an understanding of the central questions in metaethics and the various competing answers to them.
- Students will gain an understanding of the classical and contemporary theories in normative ethics (deontology, consequentialism, contractarianism, virtue ethics, among others).
 - Students will become facile with the contemporary philosophical material on these classical theories with the aim of understanding how (or whether) the former seek to correct problems with the latter.
- Students will develop their argumentation and reasoning skills in the evaluation of the various accounts under consideration.

REQUIRED TEXTS (AVAILABLE AT THE UNIVERSITY BOOKSTORE):

1. Shafer-Landau, Russ. *The Fundamentals of Ethics*. 3rd Edition. Oxford University Press, 2014.
2. Shafer-Landau, Russ. *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems*. 3rd Edition. Oxford University Press, 2014.

COURSE RESOURCES:

(THESE LINKS ARE ALSO AVAILABLE UNDER THE ‘WEBLINKS’ SECTION OF OUR BLACKBOARD SHELL)

1. Blackboard site for this course
2. The Writing Center
 - Located in Library 227
 - Visit their website at:
<http://academics.utep.edu/Default.aspx?alias=academics.utep.edu/writingcenter>
3. Jim Pryor’s “Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper”:
 - <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>
4. Purdue University Library’s Citation Guide:
 - <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/section/2/>
5. UTEP’s Instructional Support Services Module “How to Avoid Plagiarism”:
 - http://dmc.utep.edu/home/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=390:part-3-citations&catid=109:internet-research&Itemid=539

MISCELLANEOUS NOTES:

1. Any changes made to this syllabus will be announced in class.
2. If you contact me by email, I need *at least twenty-four hours* to respond.

GRADING:

- Two Surprise In Class Quizzes: 10% of semester grade (5% per quiz)
- Four Scheduled Online Quizzes on Blackboard: 20% of semester grade (5% per quiz)
- Take Home Short Answer Essay Exam #1: 20% of semester grade

- Take Home Short Answer Essay Exam #2: 20% of semester grade
- Cumulative Take Home Short Answer Essay Final Exam: 30% of semester grade

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS & REQUIREMENTS

CLASS PARTICIPATION:

- Students are expected to complete the reading for each class meeting, and they must bring their books (or a photocopy of the reading assignment) to class.
- They will be called upon in class to answer questions about the reading and are expected to make thoughtful comments or to ask well-formulated questions. No question is too simple or naïve to ask!
- Students are expected to maintain a respectful demeanor in class, although they should feel free to criticize and question one another as long as it is done in a respectful fashion.

SURPRISE IN CLASS QUIZZES:

- Two Surprise In-Class Quizzes: Each quiz will consist of several multiple choice questions. Each quiz will be on the reading material that is due on the day the quiz is given. In order to prepare for these quizzes, you must read and re-read the assigned texts carefully before you come to class.
- 10% of semester grade (5% per quiz)

SCHEDULED ONLINE QUIZZES ON BLACKBOARD:

- Four Scheduled Blackboard Quizzes: Each quiz will consist of several multiple choice questions. In order to prepare for these quizzes, you must get in the habit of reading and re-reading the assigned texts carefully before you come to class.
- Each quiz will be given on Blackboard and will have a time limit (**usually around fifteen-twenty minutes**) that is specified in the directions. Once you access the quiz, the time limit takes effect. Although the quizzes will be available for two days, you DO NOT have two days to complete them.
- 20% of semester grade (5% per quiz)
- The schedule for the quizzes is listed below under the ‘Schedule’ heading.

TAKE HOME SHORT ANSWER ESSAY EXAMS:

- You will write **three** take home short answer essay exams for this course. The essay topics will vary from those that ask you to explain a particular philosopher’s view of, say, moral obligation to those that ask you to compare and to evaluate two philosophers’ views on a question or concept.
- Please see the section “Directions for Accessing and Handing in Take Home Exams” on this syllabus.

- In addition to the specific directions for each take home exam, you will be expected to meet all of the requirements for a traditional essay, as specified in the “General Requirements for Writing Assignments” on this syllabus.
- The start dates (the dates on which the exams become available on Blackboard) and the due dates for each exam are listed on the schedule on this syllabus.
- The exams are as follows:
 - **Essay Exam #1:** You must write a minimum of **650 words per essay and you will write TWO essays**. This assignment is worth **20%** of the semester grade.
 - **Essay Exam #2:** You must write a minimum of **650 words per essay and you will write TWO essays**. This assignment is worth **20%** of the semester grade.
 - **Final Exam:** This exam is **cumulative**. You will write a minimum of **650 words per essay and you will write THREE essays**. This assignment is worth **30%** of the semester grade.

GRADING SCALE:

- A 90-100%
- B 80-89%
- C 70-79%
- D 60-69%
- F 59% and below

COURSE POLICIES

CLASS PROTOCOL AND CONDUCT:

- Students are expected to arrive on time to class. **Any students arriving to class more than 10 minutes late or leaving more than 10 minutes early will be considered absent.**
- Students must turn off all cell phones, iPods, etc. during class. If your cell phone rings during class, you will be asked to leave.
- Students are expected to refrain from chatting with their neighbors during class. If you do so, you will be asked to leave.
- Students are expected to abide by the university’s code of conduct.
- Students are expected to be respectful of both their fellow classmates as well as the teaching assistants in the class.

LAPTOPS, RECORDING DEVICES AND CELL PHONES:

- Using laptops, your cell phone (including text messaging), audio or video recorders or other digital devices during class **is prohibited**.
- If you are found using any of these devices in class, you will be asked to leave.
- **Lectures cannot be recorded** (except in individual cases where I have granted written permission).

MAKE-UP POLICY:

- Students will be allowed to make up missed work, including quizzes, ONLY in the case of documented family emergency or illness.

LATE ASSIGNMENTS:

- I will deduct one letter grade for each calendar day that an assignment is late.

EMAIL:

- All class email correspondences will be conducted exclusively through our UTEP email addresses.

BLACKBOARD:

- We will be using the Blackboard shell for our class throughout the semester.
- If you have not done so, you should learn how to use Blackboard.
- I will be using Blackboard to post course materials, including the syllabus, quizzes and your grades for your assignments.

ATTENDANCE POLICY:

- Attendance is mandatory.

TEACHING ASSISTANTS:

- The teaching assistant for this course will be available during scheduled office hours to discuss the course material with you. They are also available via email.
- Although the TA's role is to help you understand the material by answering your specific questions, the TA will NOT repeat the lectures for you. If you miss a lecture, you should ask a classmate to take notes for you.
- For legal reasons, the TA will not email you your quiz and exam grades. All assignment grades will be posted on Blackboard.

DISABILITIES:

- "UTEP seeks to provide reasonable accommodations for all qualified individuals with disabilities, including learning disabilities. This university will adhere to all applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations and guidelines with respect to providing reasonable accommodations as required affording equal educational opportunity. It is the student's responsibility to register with Disabled Student Services Office in the East Union Bldg., Room 106 within the first two weeks of classes, and inform the faculty member to arrange for appropriate accommodations."

- The Disabled Student Services Office can also be reached in the following ways:

Web: <http://www.utep.edu/dsso>

Phone: (915) 747-5148 voice or TTY

Fax: (915) 747-8712

E-Mail: dss@utep.edu

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:

- **UTEP's Policy:** "Scholastic dishonesty (which includes the attempt of any student to present the

work of another as his or her own, or any work which s(he) has not honestly performed, or attempting to pass any examination by improper means) is a serious offense and will subject the student to disciplinary action. The aiding and abetting of a student in any dishonesty is held to be an equally serious offense. All alleged acts of scholastic dishonesty should be reported to the Dean of Students for disposition. It is the Dean of Students' responsibility to investigate each allegation, dismiss the allegation, or proceed with disciplinary action in a manner which provides the accused student his or her rights of due process." See the Dean of Students office for further information at <http://www.utep.edu/dos/acadintg.htm>.

- **Students who violate the above policy will be reported to the appropriate academic office, may receive a zero or 'F' for the assignment in question and may receive a zero or 'F' for the semester.**

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:

(IN ADDITION TO THE SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR EACH ASSIGNMENT)

- 1) Essays should be written using a formal tone, must be edited for spelling and grammatical errors, and should include a clear thesis statement that answers the assigned question.
- 2) Essays must make use of the relevant assigned course readings.
- 3) Outside sources (including internet sites) may NOT be used.
- 4) Essays must have internal citations and include a formal bibliography. Both MLA and Chicago Style formatting are acceptable.
- 5) Essays must be double-spaced, have a 1-inch margin, and be written using a 12 point font. They should include page numbers in the bottom right-hand corner of the page.
- 6) Essays must include a word count underneath the author's name.
- 7) Essays will be handed in on the Blackboard site for this course.

DIRECTIONS FOR ACCESSING AND HANDING IN TAKE HOME EXAMS:

- **Accessing the exam topics and directions:**
 - You will access the exam topics and directions in the 'Exam Topics and Directions' folder on the main page of our Blackboard shell.
 - They will become available on the date specified on the schedule below.
 - **You cannot discuss the exam topics with the TAs or with me during the exam period.**
- **Handing in the take home exams:**
 - You must hand in your take home exams through the available link under the 'Assignments' tab in our Blackboard shell.
 - When you do so, you will be handing your exam in via SafeAssign, which checks your paper for plagiarism.
- **Receiving the graded exams:**
 - Your graded exams will be returned through Blackboard.
 - You can view the comments and the grade through Blackboard.
 - Your grade will also be posted in the 'My Grades' tab in Blackboard.

DIRECTIONS FOR READING ASSIGNMENTS AND SCHEDULE:.

- You are expected to have read the material for the day on which it is listed below. Pop quizzes

will cover all of the material for that day's class. Pop quizzes on Friday will cover any material from the entire week.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

(Subject to change)

Key: *FE* = *The Fundamentals of Ethics*

EL = *The Ethical Life*

○ = **Assignment available or due**

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION TO MORAL REASONING

Jan. 21st: Syllabus; Introduction to the course

WEEK 2: METAETHICS: ETHICAL RELATIVISM

Jan. 26th: "Introduction" (*FE*)

Jan. 28th: "Ethical Relativism" (Ch.19 *FE*), "Cultural Relativism" by Gensler (*EL*)

WEEK 3: METAETHICS: ETHICAL REALISM

Feb. 2nd: "The Subjectivity of Values" by Mackie (*EL*)

Feb. 4th: "Ten Arguments Against Moral Objectivity" (Ch. 21 *FE*)

WEEK 4: VALUE THEORY: HEDONISM

○ **Online Quiz #1: Available 9 pm, Feb 9th. Due by 9 pm Feb. 12th. On material from Weeks 1-3.**

Feb. 9th: "Hedonism: Its Powerful Appeal" (Ch.1 *FE*), "Hedonism" by Mill (*EL*)

Feb. 11th: "The Experience Machine" by Nozick (*EL*), "Is Happiness All That Matters?" (Ch.2 *FE*)

WEEK 5: VALUE THEORY: THE DESIRE THEORY

Feb. 16th: "Getting What You Want" (Ch.3 *FE*), "Problems for the Desire Theory" (Ch.4 *FE*)

Feb. 18th: Class canceled

Feb. 21st: Take Home Short Answer Essay Exam #1 available on Blackboard at 9 pm

WEEK 6: NORMATIVE ETHICS: RELIGION

Feb. 23rd: "Morality and Religion" (Ch.5 *FE*)

Feb. 25th: "Natural Law" (Ch.6 *FE*)

Feb. 28th: Take Home Short Answer Essay Exam #1 DUE via Blackboard at 9 pm

WEEK 7: NORMATIVE ETHICS: PSYCHOLOGICAL EGOISM AND ETHICAL EGOISM

- **Online Quiz #2: Available 9 pm March 2nd. Due by 9 pm Mar. 5th. On material from Weeks 4-6**

Mar. 2nd: “Psychological Egoism (Ch.7 *FE*)

Mar. 4th: “Ethical Egoism (Ch.8 *FE*)

WEEK 8: SPRING RECESS (NO CLASS)

Mar.9-13th

WEEK 9: NORMATIVE ETHICS: CONSEQUENTIALISM

Mar. 16th: “Consequentialism: Its Nature and Attractions” (Ch.9 *FE*)

Mar. 18th: “Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism” by Smart (*EL*), “Consequentialism: Its Difficulties” (Ch.10 *FE*)

WEEK 10: NORMATIVE ETHICS: DEONTOLOGY

Mar. 23rd: “The Good Will and the Categorical Imperative” by Kant (*EL*)

Mar. 25th: “The Kantian Perspective: Fairness and Justice” (Ch.11 *FE*), “The Kantian Perspective: Autonomy and Respect” (Ch.12 *FE*)

WEEK 11: NORMATIVE ETHICS: SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY

- **Online Quiz #3: Available 9 pm Mar. 31st. Due by 9 pm Apr. 3rd. On material from Weeks 7-10.**

Mar. 30th: “Leviathan” by Hobbes (*EL*), “The Social Contract Tradition: The Theory and Its Attractions” (Ch.13 *FE*)

Apr. 1st : Class Canceled due to conference

WEEK 12: SOCIAL CONTRACT THEORY (CONTINUED); NORMATIVE ETHICS: ETHICAL PLURALISM

Apr. 6th: “The Social Contract Tradition: Problems and Prospects” (Ch.14 *FE*)

Apr. 8th: “Ethical Pluralism and Absolute Moral Rules” (Ch.15 *FE*) ;“Ethical Pluralism: Prima Facie Duties and Ethical Particularism” (Ch.16 *FE*)

WEEK 13: NORMATIVE ETHICS: VIRTUE ETHICS

Apr. 13th: “Nicomachean Ethics” by Aristotle (*EL*)

Apr. 15th: “Virtue Ethics” (Ch.17 *FE*)

- **Apr. 16th: Take Home Short Answer Essay Exam #2 available on Blackboard at 9 pm**

WEEK 14: VIRTUE ETHICS

Apr. 20th: “Natural Goodness” by Foot (*EL*)

Apr. 22nd: Catch up day (TBA)

- **Apr. 25th: Take Home Short Answer Essay Exam #2 DUE via Blackboard at 9 pm**

WEEK 15: NORMATIVE ETHICS: FEMINIST ETHICS

- **Quiz #4: Available 9 pm Apr. 27th. Due by 9pm Apr. 30th. On material from Weeks 11-14.**

Apr. 28th: Feminist Ethics (Ch. 18, *FE*)

Apr. 30th: “What is Feminist ethics?” by Lindemann (*EL*)

WEEK 16: APPLIED ETHICS

May 4th: “The Singer Solution to World Poverty” by Singer (*EL*)

May 6th: “Puppies, Pigs, and People” by Norcross (*EL*)

May 6th: Cumulative Take Home Short Answer Essay Final Exam available on Blackboard at 9 pm

Week 17: Final Exam Week

- **May 13th : Cumulative Take Home Short Answer Essay Final Exam DUE via Blackboard at 9 pm**