

Phil 104: Ethical Theories

MWF 10–11, 105 North Gate

Website: <http://sophos.berkeley.edu/kolodny/F10Phil104.htm>

Instructor:

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Description:

This course will be a survey of arguably the greatest works of moral philosophy in the Western tradition—Aristotle’s *Nichomachean Ethics*, Hobbes’s *Leviathan*, Hume’s *Treatise of Human Nature*, Kant’s *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*, and Sidgwick’s *Methods of Ethics*—followed by some of the most influential writings of the past century. Interwoven throughout these works, so strikingly different in their methods and conclusions, are attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How should we live? Which goals or activities are the most important? Why? What makes them so?
2. Which actions or traits of character are morally obligatory or virtuous? Why? What makes them so?
3. Why, if at all, should we care about being moral? How are the answers to 2 related to the answers to 1?
4. What must we be like in order to be morally obligated, or capable of moral virtue? (After all, pebbles and insects don’t have moral obligations. In what way are we relevantly different?) In particular, must we have “free will”?
5. How, if at all, can questions like 1–4 have objectively correct answers?

Prerequisites:

Either (i) Phil 2 or (ii) two courses offered by the Berkeley Philosophy Department.

Requirements:

1. Attendance at lecture and section.
2. For each lecture, download the handout from the course website, and bring either a paper copy or a laptop to lecture. (If you would like to have a paper copy for lecture, but find it a hardship to print one out beforehand, let us know.) Each handout will end with a set of “Review Questions.” Listening to the lecture and doing the assigned reading should be enough to enable you to answer these. (However, simply reading the handout will *not* be enough.)
3. Section participation: 15%.
4. Four 3-page papers: 17% each.

5. Final exam: 17%. Open book, open note, etc. Every question on the final will be a “Review Question.” So, if you come to lecture, do the reading, and make a habit of writing out the answers to these questions, you will be fully prepared for the final.

Notes:

- GSI’s will not comment on the last paper or final exam, but will be available to discuss them in person.
- Requirements may be **reduced** if enrollment is high.

Readings:

You have two options:

1. Either buy a reader at Copy Central on Bancroft...
2. ... or access the readings online, either by following the link, or, when there is no link, going to the “Resources” tab on the course’s bSpace page.

Syllabus:

1. Friday, August 27: Introduction
2. Monday, August 30: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I
<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/nicomachaen.html>
3. Wednesday, September 1: I (continued)
4. Friday, September 3: II, III: 6–12
5. Wednesday, September 8: III: 1–5
6. Friday, September 10: VII: 1–3
First paper assigned
7. Monday, September 13: X: 7–9
8. Wednesday, September 15:
Aristotle, *Politics*, I: 1–6
<http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/politics.html>
Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Ch. 6, 8, 10–11
<http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/leviathan-contents.html>
9. Friday, September 17: Ch. 13–17
10. Monday, September 20: Ch. 13–17 (continued)
First paper due
11. Wednesday, September 22: Ch. 14–15, 20–21, 31 and 43
No class Friday, September 24
12. Monday, September 27: Ch. 16–19, 20–21
13. Wednesday, September 29: Ch. 16–19, 20–21 (continued)
14. Friday, October 1: Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* II: iii: 1–2
http://www.class.uidaho.edu/mickelsen/ToC/hume_treatise_ToC.htm
15. Monday, October 4: II: iii: 3
16. Wednesday, October 6: III: i: 1–2
Second paper assigned
17. Friday, October 8: Writing workshop, led by Katie, Eugene, and Ben!

18. Monday, October 11: III: ii: 1–2
19. Wednesday, October 13: III: iii: 1, 6
20. Friday, October 15: Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, I (bSpace)
21. Monday, October 18: II
Second paper due
22. Wednesday, October 20: II (continued, guest lecture by Eugene!)
No class Friday, October 22
23. Monday, October 25: II (continued)
24. Wednesday, October 27: III
25. Friday, October 29: III
Third paper assigned
26. Monday, November 1: Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, I, II
<http://records.viu.ca/~johnstoi/nietzsche/genealogytofc.htm>
27. Wednesday, November 3: II (continued), III
28. Friday, November 5: III (continued)
29. Monday, November 8: Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, I: i, iv
<http://www.laits.utexas.edu/poltheory/sidgwick/me/index.html>
Third paper due
30. Wednesday, November 10: II: i–iii (skip 2 and 3)
31. Friday, November 12: III: i, vi: 5–9, vii, xi
32. Monday, November 15: IV: i–iii
33. Wednesday, November 17: Open discussion, led by Katie, Eugene, and Ben!
Fourth paper assigned
No class Friday, November 19
34. Monday, November 22: IV: ii (continued), iv–vi
35. Wednesday, November 24: Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Ch. 1
<http://fair-use.org/g-e-moore/principia-ethica>
No class Friday, November 26
36. Monday, November 29: Stevenson, “The Emotive Meaning of Ethical Terms” (bSpace)
Fourth paper due
37. Wednesday, December 1: Wolf, “Moral Saints” (bSpace)
Williams, “Persons, Character, and Morality,” sect. III (bSpace)
38. Friday, December 3: Conclusion

Reading/Review/Recitation Week Meetings: Monday, December 6, Wednesday, December 8, Friday, December 10

Final Exam: Monday, December 13, 8AM–11AM

Course Policies:

Extensions:

Plan ahead. You may request extensions from your GSI *up until 72 hours* before papers are due. After then, extensions will be granted *only for medical and family emergencies*.

Submitting Work:

Papers must be submitted, on paper, by you, to your GSI, in class, by 10:10am, before the lecture starts. Papers submitted later will lose *one step* (e.g., B+ to B) *immediately* and then an *additional step every 24 hours*. If you cannot come to lecture on the due date, you may request to make other arrangements with your GSI, so long as you do so well before the deadline. Whatever the circumstances, you are responsible for ensuring that your GSI gets your paper. Forgotten or unopenable attachments, bounced or lost emails, and so on, are your responsibility.

"Re-grading":

You are strongly encouraged to discuss grades and comments on papers with your GSI or me. However, *grades on particular papers and exams will not be changed under any circumstances*. While there is no perfect system, selective "re-grading" at students' request only makes things worse. "Second" grades are likely to be less accurate and less fair than "first" grades. This is because, among other things, the GSI does not have access to other papers for purposes of comparison, the student will inevitably supply additional input (clarifications, explanations, etc.) that the original paper did not, and there are certain biases of self-selection.

The only exception, to which none of these concerns apply, is a suspected arithmetical or recording error in your final course grade. Please do not hesitate to bring this to your GSI's or my attention.

Academic Dishonesty:

"Any test, paper or report submitted by you and that bears your name is presumed to be your own original work that has not previously been submitted for credit in another course unless you obtain prior written approval to do so from your instructor."

—Report of the Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism Subcommittee, June 18, 2004.

You are expected to be familiar with the definitions of academic dishonesty in the Code of Student Conduct, which can be found here:

<http://students.berkeley.edu/osl/sja.asp?id=1143&rcol=1201>.

Plagiarism and cheating will be penalized, at a minimum, by an "F" on the paper or exam in question. It may also, depending on its seriousness, result in an "F" in the course as a whole and a report to Student Judicial Affairs.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities:

If you have an official accommodation letter from the Disabled Students' Program that is relevant to this course, please notify both me and your GSI at a reasonable time. We will do whatever we can to help.