

Introduction to Moral Philosophy (PHIL 103)
Towson University Spring 2022

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Course Description

Catalogue Description

Introduction to the history and theory of ethics. Gen Ed II.C.1 or Core: Ethical Issues & Perspectives.

Learning Objectives

The purpose of this course is to expose students to a variety of topics from across moral philosophy. This course is a survey of moral philosophy from Aristotle to contemporary times. Some questions we'll discuss include: What makes an action good or right? What happiness amounts to? Do we have duties to one another? Is abortion immoral? Is genetic enhancement permissible? No previous coursework in philosophy is required.

Course Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will have had an introduction to moral philosophy. They will also learn to construct and assess arguments for philosophical positions. Doing so will strengthen their critical thinking skills in all disciplines and even outside of academic life.

Course Requirements & Grading

There will be one 3-page paper (worth 25% of the final grade), one 5-page paper (worth 35%), and one in-class presentation (worth 30%). Participation and attendance will account for the final 10%. Guidelines for all assignments are available on blackboard.

Paper One: Due by 11:59 PM 2/15

Paper Two: Due by 11:59 PM 3/29

Presentations: 4/19-5/12

Policies & Procedures

Grading

A: 93.6-100 A-: 90-93.5 B+: 86.6-89.9 B: 83.6-86.5 B-: 80-83.5 C+: 76.6-79.9 C: 70-76.5 D+: 66.6-69.9 D: 63.6-66.5 F: 0-63.5

Late Work

Late assignments are penalized at a rate of one letter-grade increment per day late (e.g., a B+ becomes a B- on a 2-day-late paper), up to one week. Assignments that are more than a week late will receive a zero. Deadline extensions are granted only in exceptional, *documented* circumstances, and at the discretion of the instructor.

Absences

You are allowed two unexcused absences before they will begin to affect your grade. Not counting the first week, we have 26 scheduled meetings. Your grade will be determined by dividing the number of times that you are in class (not counting the first week) by 24 (maximum 100%). See Towson's absence policy for what counts as an excused absence at www.catalog.towson.edu/undergraduate/academic-policies/class-attendance-absence-policy.

Use of Electronics

In this course you will be allowed to use your laptop or tablet to take notes or view the readings on blackboard. Using an electronic device for anything outside of this will result in being marked absent for the day.

Students with Disabilities

This course is in compliance with Towson University policies for students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are encouraged to register with Disability Support Services (DSS), 7720 York Road, Suite 232, 410-704-2638 (Voice) or 410-704- 4423 (TDD). Students who suspect that they have a disability but do not have documentation are encouraged to contact DSS for advice on how to obtain appropriate evaluation. A memo from DSS authorizing your accommodation is needed before any accommodation can be made

Academic Integrity

The University's Academic Integrity Policy is published in the Towson University Undergraduate Catalog and is available online at the web site of Student Affairs located at <https://www.towson.edu/studentaffairs/policies/>. Academic dishonesty specifically includes acts of plagiarism, fabrication and falsification, cheating, abuse of academic materials, and multiple submissions. Especially note that students may not re-use research papers or work submitted in previous or other classes, this includes group projects, or work performed by someone else. Academic dishonesty is unacceptable. The penalty for such dishonesty is a grade of 0 for the assigned work, possible failure for the course and the submission of a letter to the Office of Judicial Affairs.

Course Repetition

Students may not repeat the course more than once without prior permission of the Academic Standards Committee.

Emergencies

Please refer to the following: Web Site: www.towson.edu; Telephone: 410 704-2000. For TU Text Alert System Sign-up at: www.towson.edu/adminfinance/facilities/police/campusemergency/

Incompletes

An 'I' grade may be granted towards the end of the term, but only for verifiable medical reasons or for documented circumstances beyond the control of the student. This grade will not be granted if the student does not meet either of these criteria. The 'I' automatically becomes an 'F' at the end of the next full semester unless changed by the instructor because missing coursework was completed. If the conditions for granting the original incomplete verifiably persist, the instructor in consultation with the chair of the department may extend the 'I' grade for a period not to exceed an additional regular semester.

Reading Schedule

(Everything is available on blackboard)

Week One: Introduction

2/1: Argument Clinic & How to Write a Philosophy Paper (No Assigned Reading)

2/3: Shelley Kagan, "The Structure of Normative Ethics"

Week Two: Ethical Theories (Utilitarianism)

2/8: Epicurus, "Letter to Menoeceus"

John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Chapter 2 only)

2/10: G.E. Moore, selections from *Principia Ethica*

Week Three: Ethical Theories (Utilitarianism)

2/15: Peter Railton, "Alienation, Consequentialism, & the Demands of Morality"

John Rawls, "Classical Utilitarianism"

2/17: Philip Pettit, "Consequentialism and Respect for Persons"

Week Four: Ethical Theories (Deontology)

2/22: Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (selections)

Immanuel Kant, *Metaphysics of Morals* (selections)

Immanuel Kant, "On A Supposed Right to Lie from Philanthropy" (Pages 611-615 only)

2/24: W.D. Ross, selections from *The Right and the Good*

Week Five: Ethical Theories (Deontology)

3/1: NO CLASS

3/3: Judith Jarvis Thomson, "The Trolley Problem"

Christine M. Korsgaard, "The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil"

Week Six: Ethical Theories (Virtue Ethics)

3/8: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Books I-II

3/10: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book VI

Week Seven: Ethical Theories (Virtue Ethics)

3/15: Seneca, *On the Happy Life*

John McDowell, "Virtue and Reason"

3/17: Gilbert Harman, "Moral Philosophy Meets Social Psychology"

Week Eight: Meta-Ethics (Non-Cognitivism)

3/29: P.T. Geach, "Assertion"

Allan Gibbard, "Planning and Ruling Out: The Frege-Geach Problem"

3/31: Jack Woods, "Expressivism and Moore's Paradox"

Week Nine: Meta-Ethics (Error Theory)

4/5: Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (Chapter One)

Finlay, "The Error in Error Theory"

4/7: Olson, "In Defense of Moral Error Theory"

Week Ten: Meta-Ethics (Relativism)

4/12: Benedict, "A Defense of Ethical Relativism"

Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism"

4/14: Williams, "Vulgar Relativism"

Week Eleven: Applied Ethics (Abortion)

4/19: Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"

4/21: Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion"

Week Twelve: Applied Ethics (Selective Abortion)

4/26: Marsha Saxton, "Why Members of the Disability Community Oppose Prenatal Diagnosis and Selective Abortion"

4/28: Mary Ann Baily, "Why I Had Amniocentesis"

Week Thirteen: Applied Ethics (Genetic Enhancement)

5/3: Michael Sandel, "The Case against Perfection"

5/5: Julian Savulescu, "Genetic Interventions and the Ethics of Enhancement of Human Beings"

Week Fourteen: Applied Ethics (Genital Mutilation)

5/10: Chambers, "Are Breast Implants Better Than Female Genital Mutilation?"

5/12: Earp, "Female Genital Mutilation and Male Circumcision" Avery, Andrew,