

# INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

**MWF ###:##-##:## ♦ Room: ###**

Ethics is the study of the principles of human behavior and conduct. While cultural anthropologists and sociologists seek to accurately describe the way people act, ethicists present arguments for why humans should or should not act in a certain way. Ethics therefore concerns itself broadly with how it is best to live and narrowly with how one ought to act in a certain situation. We begin the class by looking at some basic moral concerns related to the law. We then examine the leading philosophical theories of right and wrong action. We proceed to look at theories of what is good, valuable or worth pursuing. We conclude the class by focusing on two global ethical issues: war and poverty.

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Office Location: TBD  
Office Hours: TBD

## **Texts and Readings**

*All readings will be distributed through the university's online platform.*

## **Learning Outcomes**

This course serves as an introduction to ethical argumentation. Students will closely examine issues of value and morality. By the conclusion of this course, students will produce a well-organized argumentative paper that demonstrates their ability to reason and express themselves clearly. Throughout the course, students will also:

- » Learn to analyze and criticize ethical arguments.
- » Practice reformulating difficult ethical arguments in their own voice.
- » Acquire an ethical vocabulary and a basic understanding of the range of moral dilemmas.
- » Further develop independence of thought.
- » Improve their critical thinking and writing abilities.
- » Become aware of diverse perspectives on justice and morality.

## **Assessment**

To benefit from this course, you must be prepared and engaged in class. This means being on time and completing required assignments before class.

The grading distribution is as follows:

- » Short Assignments: 30%. There will be six short assignments. These assignments will consist of quizzes and homework responses. Out of the six total assignments, the lowest score will be dropped from the final grade. Quizzes will generally be unannounced and response assignments will be handed out in class, so it is important to attend class every day.
- » Blog posts: 10%. This class will require two blog posts on a popular platform of the student's choosing. The first post will be an informative "consciousness raising" piece to explain an ethical issue to a popular audience. The second post will take an argumentative stance on a controversial moral dilemma.

- » Media Project: 10%. Students may choose to do either an audio or video project. The audio project consists of a recorded philosophical dialogue with a friend, family member or colleague. The video project involves a "vlog" response to an internet video or article with ethical content.
- » Final Exam: 20%. The final exam will be comprehensive. It could include essays, matching questions, short answer questions, multiple choice questions or definitions.
- » Final Paper: 20%. Students will write an argumentative paper in applied ethics. Prompts will be distributed, but students are free to write on any topic they like. This paper may also take the form of an extended blog post. More information about the paper and a grading rubric will be distributed at a later date.
- » Participation: 10%. Students will be expected to attend class and participate in class discussions and workshop activities.

### **Class Policies**

*Attendance* - Missing a significant amount of class will result in missed response assignments, missed blog posts, missed quizzes and a reduced class participation grade. Students will also be responsible for lecture material on the final exam. Homework response assignments must be turned in on the online platform and as a hard copy in class. Any response assignments turned in only on the online platform will not be graded. Response assignments, blog posts, quizzes, the media project and the final exam cannot be made up without a formal excuse.

*Electronic Devices* - Tablets, e-readers, smartphones and laptops are permitted in class, as long as they do not become a distraction. If electronic devices become a distraction, this policy will become significantly more restrictive and only select electronic devices will be permitted.

*Late Assignments* - Late response assignments and blog posts will not be accepted without a formal excuse. The final paper and media project will be accepted after the day they are due, but either will lose a third of a grade point for each day it is late. For example, an A paper turned in one day late will be assigned an A-. For those students who present a valid formal excuse, makeup work is due by the last day of classes.

*Disabilities or Special Needs* - Any student requiring special accommodations should speak to the instructor immediately.

### **Academic Dishonesty:**

No cheating or plagiarism will be tolerated. Clear cases of cheating or plagiarizing will result in an immediate F for the assignment. Be aware that unintentional plagiarism still counts as plagiarism. If you copy a passage or idea from your notes and forget where it came from, that still counts as plagiarism. It is up to you to make sure that you properly cite any claim, passage or idea that is not your own. Ideas in student writing that are not original or properly cited will count as plagiarism. Please look over the university's policy on plagiarism carefully.

## Course Outline

Please make sure to read the assigned reading *before* class.

Week	Content
Introduction to Moral Philosophy	
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M Introduction to moral philosophy (no reading)</li> <li>– W L. Vaughn "How to Read an Argument" pp. 21-27</li> <li>– F L. Vaughn "How to Read an Argument" pp. 27-33</li> </ul>
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M Labor Day (no class)</li> <li>– W Plato <i>Crito</i> 43a-48d</li> <li>– F Plato <i>Crito</i> 48d-54e</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M M.L. King Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail" pp. 76-82</li> <li>– W M.L. King Jr. "Letter from Birmingham Jail" pp. 82-95</li> <li>– F Workshop on the duty to obey the law</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M J. Pfaff "A better approach to violent crime"</li> <li>– W USCCB "Responsibility, Rehabilitation and Restoration"</li> <li>– F Workshop on prison ethics</li> </ul>
Normative Theories of Right and Wrong	
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M J.S. Mill <i>Utilitarianism</i> ch. 2 pp. 4-9</li> <li>– W J.S. Mill <i>Utilitarianism</i> ch. 2 pp. 9-14</li> <li>– F J.S. Mill <i>Utilitarianism</i> ch. 2 pp. 14-18</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M "Contemporary Utilitarianism"</li> <li>– W P. Singer "Why We Must Ration Healthcare"</li> <li>– F Workshop on bioethics and utilitarianism</li> </ul>
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M Mid-Semester Break (no class)</li> <li>– W I. Kant "On the Supposed Right to Lie from Benevolent Motives"</li> <li>– F T.L. Carson "Ross' Ethical Theory" pp. 1-7</li> </ul>
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M T.L. Carson "Ross' Ethical Theory" pp. 8-14</li> <li>– W "Contemporary Deontology"</li> <li>– F Universal Declaration of Human Rights</li> </ul>
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M H. Malm "Paid Surrogacy: Arguments and Responses"</li> <li>– W Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith <i>Donum Vitae</i> (excerpt)</li> <li>– F Workshop on deontology and business ethics</li> </ul>
Theories of Value	
10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M <i>Theories of Value</i>, Introduction and Hedonism</li> <li>– W D. Haybron <i>The Pursuit of Unhappiness</i> (excerpt)</li> <li>– F Writing Workshop #1 (no reading)</li> </ul>
11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M <i>Theories of Value</i>, Preference Satisfaction</li> <li>– W St. Augustine <i>On the Free Choice of the Will</i>, Book II (excerpt)</li> <li>– F <i>Theories of Value</i>, Objective List</li> </ul>

Week	Content
12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M Aristotle <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book I ch. 1-5</li> <li>– W Aristotle <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book I ch. 7-8, Book II ch. 1</li> <li>– F Writing Workshop #2 (no reading)</li> </ul>
War and Global Poverty	
13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M E. Anscombe “Mr. Truman’s Degree”</li> <li>– W Thanksgiving Break (no class)</li> <li>– F Thanksgiving Break (no class)</li> </ul>
14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M J. McMahan “Rethinking the ‘Just War,’ Parts 1 + 2”</li> <li>– W P. Singer “Famine, Affluence and Morality”</li> <li>– F G. Brock “Global Poverty, Decent Work, and Remedial Responsibilities”</li> </ul>
15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– M Writing Workshop #3 (no reading)</li> <li>– W Workshop on philosophy and professional development (no reading)</li> <li>– F Final review</li> </ul>