



Introduction to Ethics: PHIL 21001/007

Spring semester, 2024

Tuesday, Thursday: 2:15 PM – 3:30 PM

Location: BOW 204

Instructor: Kevin Fink

Office: Philosophy Dept., 320 Bowman

Office Hours: 3:30 – 4:30 PM T/R and by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course is an introduction to philosophical ethics. The central ethical questions that philosophers ask are: What is the good life? What has value? How ought we to act? For the majority of this course, we will read primary texts by some of the great philosophers, such as Aristotle, Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill - each of which typifies a tradition of thinking central to Western philosophical ethics. An unhappy but well known fact is that, for most of its history, the Western tradition has been dominated by middle to upper class white males. So, we will also explore and discuss, albeit briefly, some such criticisms of traditional ethics and some meta-ethical questions concerning the foundations of ethics. Recently, however, more concern has been expressed that traditional ethics is biased in favor of promoting the good and protecting the dignity of human beings over the good and dignity of animals and ecosystems. The diversity element of this course, specifically, will be satisfied by readings dealing with questions of animal rights and environmental ethics. Here, students will be asked to explore the extent, if any, to which non-human beings or entities should be taken into account when deciding how to act, what has value, and what constitutes the good life. Some attention will also be paid to feminist criticisms of traditional Western ethics.

COMPETENCIES (LEARNING OUTCOMES):

Students will be able to understand, explain, compare and apply prominent ethical theories in the history of Western philosophy. Students will be able to intelligently discuss the strengths and weaknesses of these various theories and will gain greater ability to rationally critique/defend their own ethical principles and application of such principles to ethical issues and problems.

ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Unless otherwise indicated, or unless you make other arrangements with me, all assignments for this course will be submitted electronically through Blackboard.

SHORT-TERM DISTANCE EDUCATION

In the event that I am unable to come to campus (due to mild illness, quarantine/isolation, snow closure, etc.) but able to teach, we will meet in a virtual classroom (provided on Canvas) during our regularly schedule class time. You will be informed via email as soon as feasible of such an occurrence and provided a link to our virtual classroom.

TEXTS

1. Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, translated by Martin Ostwald. Library of Liberal Arts (Prentice-Hall), 1999.
2. Kant, Immanuel. *Groundwork of the Metaphysic of Morals*, translated by H. J. Paton. Harper & Row, 2009.



3. Mill, John Stuart and Jeremy Bentham. *Utilitarianism and Other Essays*. Penguin, 2004.
4. Hume, David. *An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*. Hackett, 1983.
5. Various articles and excerpts posted on Canvas.

ENROLLMENT / OFFICIAL REGISTRATION, DROP, WITHDRAWAL

- The official registration deadline for this course is 1/22/2024.
- The course drop deadline is 1/29/2024.
- The course withdrawal deadline is 4/1/2024.

University policy requires all students to be officially registered in each class they are attending. Students who are not officially registered for a course by published deadlines should not be attending classes and will not receive credit or a grade for the course. Each student must confirm enrollment by checking his/her class schedule (using Student Tools in FlashLine) prior to the deadline indicated. Registration errors must be corrected prior to the deadline.

EVALUATIONS (See schedule: dates are subject to change; any change will be announced in class.)

TOTAL POINTS = 350

Two critical responses: 25 points each

Three exams: 100 points each

GRADING SCALE

A	94-100	C	73-76
A-	90-93	C-	70-72
B+	87-89	D+	67-69
B	83-86	D	63-66
B-	80-82	D-	60-62
C+	77-79	F	Below 60

ATTENDANCE

Attendance at class is required. Although I will not take roll, it will not be possible for me to furnish students with class notes or give private lectures on material already covered. Further, students will be evaluated not only on the readings, but also on any other material covered in class. Most importantly, failure to attend an exam or to turn in any assignment on time without prior approval by the professor will result in a zero for that evaluation (except in the most extreme of cases, in which proper justification will be required).

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

University policy 3342-3-18 requires that students with disabilities be provided reasonable accommodations to ensure their equal access to course content. If you have a documented disability and require accommodations, please contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to make arrangements for necessary classroom adjustments. Please note, you must first verify your eligibility for these through Student Disability Services (contact 330-672-3391 or visit www.kent.edu/sds for more information on registration procedures).

ACADEMIC COMPLAINTS

The Philosophy Department Grievance Procedure for handling student grievances is in conformity with the Student Academic Complaint Policy and Procedures set down as University Policy 3342-16 in the



University Policy Register. For information concerning the details of the grievance procedure, please see the departmental chairperson.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Cheating and plagiarism, as defined in the University Policy 3342-3-07, Administrative policy and procedures regarding student cheating and plagiarism, section C will not be tolerated. In accordance with section D of that policy, appropriate sanctions will be imposed on students discovered cheating or plagiarizing. Sanctions include but are not limited to (i) assigning a zero grade for the work in which the cheating or plagiarism took place or (ii) assigning a grade of “F” in the course in which the cheating or plagiarism took place. For more information concerning academic dishonesty, please consult University Policy 3342-3-07.

SCHEDULE

On each date indicated below, students are expected to come to class prepared to discuss the material listed for that day’s session – i.e., read the stuff listed before class. Students are highly encouraged to discuss in class any questions or difficulties that they may have concerning that day’s reading.

Date	Topics	Readings	Assessments
16-Jan		Introduction	
18-Jan	Threats to ethics	Blackburn “Seven Threats to Ethics” (from <i>Being Good</i>) ON CANVAS	
23-Jan		Plato <i>Euthyphro</i> , Benedict “Anthropology and the Abnormal” ON CANVAS	
25-Jan	Virtue ethics	Aristotle: <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book 1	
30-Jan		<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book 1	
1-Feb		<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book 2	
6-Feb		<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book 7	
8-Feb		<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book 10	
13-Feb		<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book 10	Receive Exam One
15-Feb	Duty-based ethics	Kant: <i>Groundwork</i> , Preface & Chapter 1 (Paton, pp. 55-73)	
20-Feb		Kant: <i>Groundwork</i> , Preface & Chapter 1 (Paton, pp. 55-73)	Exam One Due

22-Feb		<i>Groundwork</i> , Chapter 2 (Paton, pp. 74-113)	
27-Feb		<i>Groundwork</i> , Chapter 2 (Paton, pp. 74-113)	
29-Feb	Utilitarianism	Bentham: <i>An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation</i> , chapters I-V (pp. 65-97)	
5-Mar		Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 272-298)	
7-Mar		Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 272-298)	
12-Mar		<i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapters 3 and 4 (pp. 298-314)	
14-Mar		Hume <i>An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> (pp. 13-34, 38-51, 72-93)	
19-Mar		Hume <i>An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> (pp. 13-34, 38-51, 72-93)	Receive Exam Two
21-Mar	Animal liberation/rights	Singer: "Animal Liberation" ON CANVAS	
26-Mar	Spring Break: No classes		
28-Mar	Spring Break: No classes		
2-Apr		Regan: "Animal Rights, Human Wrongs" ON CANVAS	Exam Two Due
4-Apr		Sagoff: "Animal Liberation, Environmental Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce" ON CANVAS	

9-Apr	Environmental Ethics	Leopold: "The Land Ethic" ON CANVAS	
11-Apr		Callicott "The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic" ON CANVAS	
16-Apr		Rolston: "Challenges in Environmental Ethics" ON CANVAS	
18-Apr		Goodpaster: "On Being Morally Considerable" ON CANVAS	
23-Apr	Feminist critiques of traditional ethics	J. Sterba "Feminism: The Masculine Bias in Traditional Ethics and How to Correct it" ON CANVAS	
25-Apr		Slicer: "Your Daughter or Your Dog?" ON CANVAS	
30-Apr		George: "Discrimination and Bias in the Vegan Ideal" ON CANVAS	Receive Final Exam
2-May		Catch up / Finals review / Concluding discussions	
7-May		Finals week	Final Exam Due
9-May		Finals week	