



Introduction to Ethics: PHIL 21001/002

Fall semester, 2024

Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 11:00 AM – 11:50 AM

Location: BOW 207

Instructor: Kevin Fink

Office: Philosophy Dept., 320 Bowman

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 12:00-12:30 PM and 1:45-2:15 PM 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 and multicultural 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.

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 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 8/25/24.
- The course drop deadline is 9/1/24.
- The course withdrawal deadline is 10/27/24.

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 3342-3-01.3 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 Accessibility Services (contact 330-672-3391 or visit www.kent.edu/sas 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 3-01.8, 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 3-01.8.

REQUEST FOR RELIGIOUS ACCOMMODATIONS (IN COMPLIANCE WITH H.B. 353)

Endorsed by Faculty Senate on 5/8/23

The University welcomes individuals from all different faiths, philosophies, religious traditions, and other systems of belief, and supports their respective practices. In compliance with University policy and the Ohio Revised Code, the University permits students to request class absences for up to three (3) days, per term, in order to participate in organized activities conducted under the auspices of a religious denomination, church, or other religious or spiritual organization. Students will not be penalized as a result of any of these excused absences.

The request for excusal must be made, in writing, during the first fourteen (14) days of the semester and include the date(s) of each proposed absence or request for alternative religious accommodation. The request must clearly state that the proposed absence is to participate in religious activities. The request must also provide the particular accommodation(s) you desire.

You will be notified by me if your request is approved, or, if it is approved with modification. I will work with you in an effort to arrange a mutually agreeable alternative arrangement. For more information regarding this Policy you may contact the Student Ombuds (ombuds@kent.edu).

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
8/19/24		Introduction	
8/21/24	Threats to ethics	Blackburn “Seven Threats to Ethics” (from <i>Being Good</i>)	
8/23/24		Blackburn “Seven Threats to Ethics” (from <i>Being Good</i>)	
8/26/24		Plato <i>Euthyphro</i> , Benedict “Anthropology and the Abnormal”	
8/28/24		Plato <i>Euthyphro</i> , Benedict “Anthropology and the Abnormal”	
8/30/24	Virtue ethics	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book 1	
9/2/24	Labor Day: No Classes		

9/4/24		<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book 1	
9/6/24		<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book 1	
9/9/24		<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book 2	
9/11/24		<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book 2	
9/13/24		<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book 10	
9/16/24		<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , book 10	
9/18/24	Duty-based ethics	Kant: <i>Groundwork</i> , Preface & Chapter 1 (Paton, pp. 55-73)	
9/20/24		Kant: <i>Groundwork</i> , Preface & Chapter 1 (Paton, pp. 55-73)	
9/23/24		<i>Groundwork</i> , Chapter 2 (Paton, pp. 74-113)	
9/25/24		<i>Groundwork</i> , Chapter 2 (Paton, pp. 74-113)	
9/27/24		<i>Groundwork</i> , Chapter 2 (Paton, pp. 74-113)	
9/30/24			Exam One
10/2/24	Utilitarianism	Bentham: <i>An Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation</i> , chapters I-V (pp. 65-97)	
10/4/24	Fall Break: No Classes		
10/7/24		Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 272-298)	
10/9/24		Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 272-298)	
10/11/24		Mill: <i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapters 1 and 2 (pp. 272-298)	

10/14/24		<i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapters 3 and 4 (pp. 298-314)	
10/16/24		<i>Utilitarianism</i> , chapters 3 and 4 (pp. 298-314)	
10/18/24		Hume <i>An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> (pp. 13-34)	
10/21/24		Hume <i>An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> (pp. 38-51)	
10/23/24		Hume <i>An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals</i> (pp. 72-93)	
10/25/24			Exam Two
10/28/24	Animal liberation/rights	Singer: "Animal Liberation"	
10/30/24		Regan: "Animal Rights, Human Wrongs"	
11/1/24		Regan: "Animal Rights, Human Wrongs"	
11/4/24		Sagoff: "Animal Liberation, Environmental Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce"	
11/6/24	Environmental Ethics	Leopold: "The Land Ethic"	
11/8/24		Callicott "The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic"	
11/11/24	Veterans Day: No Classes		
11/13/24		Callicott "The Conceptual Foundations of the Land Ethic"	
11/15/24		Rolston: "Challenges in Environmental Ethics"	
11/18/24		Rolston: "Challenges in Environmental Ethics"	
11/20/24		Goodpaster: "On Being Morally Considerable"	
11/22/24		Goodpaster: "On Being Morally Considerable"	

11/25/24	Feminist critiques of traditional ethics	J. Sterba "Feminism: The Masculine Bias in Traditional Ethics and How to Correct it"	
11/27/24	Thanksgiving Break: No Classes		
11/29/24	Thanksgiving Break: No Classes		
12/2/24		Slicer: "Your Daughter or Your Dog?"	
12/4/24		George: "Discrimination and Bias in the Vegan Ideal"	
12/6/24		George: "Discrimination and Bias in the Vegan Ideal"	
12/9/24	Finals Week: Our final is Thursday, December 12 from 10:15am to 12:30pm in our usual classroom		