

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER

Course Syllabus

PHIL 2306: Introduction to Ethics
Instructor: Gregory L. Bock, Ph.D.
Spring 2025
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Office Hours: MWF 11:15-12:10

Required Textbooks

Justice by Michael Sandel
Other reading materials are provided for free (OER) in Canvas.

Course Catalog Description:

A study of moral theory and ethical decision-making including a critical analysis of practical and professional cases.

Course Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students will be able to...

1. explain and critique the ethical theories of the world's most influential philosophers.
2. apply various ethical theories to concrete cases and contemporary moral problems.
3. analyze and evaluate the argument of an essay that takes a point of view on an ethical issue.
4. demonstrate competent writing skills in an argumentative and philosophical essay.
5. demonstrate competent oral communication skills, arguing for a point of view in a presentation.
6. describe how theories of morality apply to the self.

Grading Scale Percents

A=90-100%, B=80-89%, C=70-79%, D=60-69%, F=less than 60%

Grading:

Major Assignments	
Ethics Bowl Group Presentation (2@100 points each):	200 points
Midterm	100 points
Final Exam	100 points
Quizzes	100 points
Attendance	50 points

TOTAL:

450 points (lowest major assignment dropped)

Assessment:

Ethics Bowl Group Presentations: Students will work in groups of no more than five students to analyze cases from the case set. Preparation will involve researching the background of the case and exploring the moral dimensions of the case. On the day of the presentation, the group will participate in an ethics bowl match with another group. Points will be earned based on the ethics bowl score sheet. An ethics bowl match is not a zero-sum game. There can be ties, and both teams can walk away with A's. The grade will be based on evidence of critical thinking and being able to support a point of view, using moral theory. The score sheet templates will be available in Canvas prior to the date of the presentation.

Exams: The midterm and final exams will be closed book and based on the ethics bowl case sets. On the day of the exam, the instructor will randomly choose one of the cases from the case set and put it on the screen with one of the questions from the end of the case. Students will answer the question with a short essay in the time provided. Grades will be based on the same grading rubric as the group case presentation assignment. A strong application of moral theory is required.

Quizzes: The quizzes cover the ten chapters of Sandel's *Justice*. These are taken online and are open book. But you must not receive help from any other source, including A.I.

Attendance At the start of the semester, each student has fifty points for attendance and one free unexcused absence. Each unexcused absence after the first is penalized five points per day against the attendance grade up to fifty points. Excused absences will not count against the fifty points but need to be accompanied with documentation (e.g. a doctor's note). This documentation must be submitted when the student returns to class and no later. After losing fifty points, no further points will be deducted even if there are more absences. Students may not see points deducted in the grade book immediately or even until the end of the semester, so it is the student's responsibility to be aware of the number of attendance points remaining and make sure that the attendance sheet is accurate on a weekly basis.

Course Policies:

Late work policy: Exams must be taken during the class time on the day of the test. Quizzes must be taken before each deadline. Make-ups are only allowed under special circumstances, such as a serious illness accompanied by a doctor's note.

Communication policy: The best way to communicate with the instructor is through UT Tyler e-mail (gbock@uttyler.edu) or in Canvas. Students can expect replies within 48 hours, excluding weekends and holidays. Students who do not receive a reply within this timeframe should attempt to contact the instructor again. The instructor communicates with the class via

Canvas emails and announcements. It is important that students check their email and allow push notifications for class announcements.

Class conduct policy: The subject matter of this class can make some people hot under the collar. This said, all comments and behavior must be classroom appropriate. What does “classroom appropriate” mean? It does *not* mean that students cannot express unpopular opinions. It means practicing reasoning and logical argumentation. It means being civil and listening with respect. Insults, snide comments, name-calling, cutting someone off, derogatory tones, sarcasm, ridicule, cussing, vulgarity, personal attacks, racial slurs, misogynistic remarks, etc. will not be allowed. If you are unsure about what counts as disrespectful, consult the instructor or the Golden Rule. The instructor will act as the final word on what is or is not classroom appropriate. Violators may be ejected from the class.

Cell phone policy (face-to-face sections): Mobile devices can be used in the classroom if it is related to what is going on in class. If you have an electronic textbook or plan to take notes on your device, please let me know early in the semester. They are permissible as long as they don’t distract you or your classmates from the lesson.

Arriving late or leaving early policy (face-to-face sections): Arriving on time can sometimes be challenging, but it is better to be late than never. However, late arrivals and early departures can be disruptive to others in the classroom. For this reason, please don’t make a habit of it. If it does become a habit, points will be deducted from the attendance grade.

Extra credit policy: Extra credit may be available from time to time when the instructor announces it. It is not available upon request, especially not during the last week of class.

“It is what it is” final grade policy: Grades are final once the final grade percentage has been posted in Canvas at the end of the semester. No changes will be made unless the instructor has made a mistake. Grades are not bumped up unless the student is within .5% of the next letter grade. For example, an 89.5% is an A. An 89.4% is a B. No extra credit opportunities will be given during finals week. The conditions for an “incomplete” are stated in the university handbook: “(a) the student has been making satisfactory progress in the course; (b) the student is unable to complete all course work or final exam due to unusual circumstances that are beyond personal control and are acceptable to the instructor; and (c) the student presents these reasons prior to the time that the final grade roster is due.” The terms and deadline for satisfying an “incomplete” will be set by the instructor.

A.I. Policy: AI is permitted only for specific assignments or situations, and appropriate acknowledgment is required. For the readings, you may use AI to better understand what the authors say and what the philosophical ideas mean. For the group reports, you may use AI to research a topic and brainstorm your group's ideas, but you may not use it to write your group presentation or report for you. Everything you write in class must be in your own words. You may use AI to study for the exam too, but you may not use AI during the test, and your essay must be in your own words and express your own opinion.

[UT TYLER HONOR CODE](#)

I embrace honor and integrity.
Therefore, I choose not to lie, cheat or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

By the way, it's really bad karma to cheat in an ethics class.