THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT TYLER
Course Syllabus

PHIL 2306: Introduction to Ethics
Spring 2026 ONLINE
Credit Hours: 3
Prerequisites: None
Instructor: Chris King, Ph.D.
E-Mail: christopherking@uttyler.edu
Office: None
Administrative Office Phone: 903.566.7373
Office Hours: None

Required Readings
    Ethics in a Nutshell, by Matt Deaton (available in Canvas)
    Justice, by Michael Sandel ISBN: 9780374532505
    Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics, by Cohen and Wellman ISBN: 9781118479391
        Now available (free) here:
        https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uttyler/detail.action?docID=1597998

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

The Gist of the Course:
    Ethics is the study of right and wrong. Is right and wrong a matter of personal taste? Is morality
    the same as legality? What is the good life? What kind of person or professional should I be?
    Whether you've given much thought to these questions before, you're living out answers to them
    right now. So, it's worth spending some time thinking carefully about them and exploring the
    options. That's what this class is about.

Course Outcomes:
1.   Explain and critique the ethical theories of the world's most influential philosophers.
2.   Apply various ethical theories to contemporary moral problems.
3.   Assess philosophical arguments with the tools of logic.
4.   Demonstrate competent writing skills in an argumentative and philosophical essay.
5.   Demonstrate competent oral communication skills in a class 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:

    Initiator Posts (10 @ 100 points each):   900 points (lowest dropped)
    Response Post Assignments (10 @ 10 pts each) 100 points
    Paper   100 points
    TOTAL: 1100 points

Assessment:

Discussion board assignment: Students will make a minimum of six weekly contributions to the discussion board: 1 initiator post + 5 response posts = 6 total posts (minimum).

INITIATOR POSTS: Students will write one initiator post each week. An initiator post is one that starts a thread based on the discussion prompt on the discussion board. A good post will offer a clear point of view and bring moral theory to bear on the question. It will also make connections to other material in the book or the course, demonstrating the student's understanding and ability to synthesize all course material.

The post must be <u>at least</u> 300 words (FYI: A's aren't usually earned by students who aim only for the minimum). There's no maximum word count, but keep in mind that grades are not based on quantity of words but on demonstrated comprehension and critical thinking. The grading rubric below shows exactly what is expected.

Initiator posts are <u>due by Wednesday night</u>.

When you quote from the textbook, parenthetical citations are sufficient, for example: (Sandel, 4). If students use only course material to quote from, quotation marks and parenthetical citations are enough, for example: "yada, yada" (Sandel, 5). If students use even one outside source – like the excellent <u>Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy</u> – a reference list for *all* sources must be included at the end of the post and must follow Chicago Manual of Style (CMS). See <u>here</u> for CMS examples, and see how proper citations affect the grade in the rubric below. Not referring to the textbook at all beyond the case will result in, at best, a C on a post. I want to see you use what you have learned in the readings (and videos) and apply it to the case.

Students must post first in order to view their classmates' posts. The edit function will be disabled. If students want to edit after posting, they may reply in the thread with corrections or request that the instructor delete the post. There must be a very good reason for deletion. For grading purposes, I consider the first post that is posted by each student to be the initiator post even if it is blank or incomplete.

Late initiator posts can be turned in for a lower grade before the board officially closes on Sunday evening. A late penalty of half a letter grade per day applies in each case unless accompanied by a valid excuse (e.g. a doctor's note that indicates a serious illness). *Technical issues are not valid excuses for late work in an online course unless they are the university's fault.*

RESPONSE POSTS: In addition to the weekly initiator post, students will write <u>at least</u> five response posts each week (for a total of 6 weekly contributions: 1 initiator post + 5 response posts = 6). A response post is one that replies to a classmate's post and continues the conversation. One that ends the conversation or just says "I agree" in so many words does not qualify as a response. To avoid conversation-stoppers, posts should state an opinion, make connections to the reading and include at least one question to prompt discussion. The minimum word count for **each** response post is 50 words. The response post assignment is pass/fail; students either meet the minimum requirements listed here or receive no credit. Students who far exceed the minimum response post requirements may receive extra credit.

Response posts are <u>due by Sunday night</u>.

Late response posts will not be accepted. Once the board closes on Sunday night, there are no further opportunities to complete the assignment, so it's advisable to post early to avoid unforeseen events such as technical problems on Sunday night. *Technical issues are not valid excuses for late work in an online course unless they are the university's fault.*

Discussion boards will remain unlocked for the duration of the semester to encourage ongoing conversation; however, posts that come in after Sunday night won't be graded.

The discussion board is the focus of this class, the main learning tool. This said, I hope that you think of it as such and not merely as something to check off a list. I will be active on the boards and hope to be involved in some rich conversations. Be sure to return regularly to the threads to reply to questions and comments, especially on your own thread.

DISCUSSION BOARD RUBRIC (INITIATOR POSTS)	
0-20 points	Point of view is clear and well-defended.
0-20 points	Multiple connections made to readings or videos for the week and ideas from earlier material if applicable
0-20 points	Moral theory plays a prominent role in the post.
0-20 points	Conveys respect for other points of view even if it takes a contrary position
0-20 points	Grammar is polished, and citation style conforms to Chicago Manual of Style.

Cases of plagiarism earn an automatic zero and a possible F in the course. **Using AI generated writing and presenting it as your own is also plagiarism. Do not do this.** Plagiarized posts may be sent to UT Tyler Judicial Affairs to receive additional consequences.

Paper: The purpose of this argumentative essay is to allow students to demonstrate how much they have learned in the course. Students will take sides on an ethical issue discussed in chapters from the Cohen & Wellman book *not already discussed in class*. Throughout the paper, students are required to apply ideas from the course material – especially Cohen & Wellman – in support of their point of view. To earn an A, the paper should primarily engage course material, but using outside sources is permissible and can help boost the grade. The paper must use proper citations and include a reference list that conforms to the Chicago Manual of Style. See here. Use either footnotes or the author-date system and include a reference list on the last page.

Other requirements:
- 1500-2000 words
- Double-spaced
- No cover page

- Name and title at the top center of first page
- Page numbers on the bottom right of each page
- Standard twelve-point font (e.g. Times New Roman)
- One inch margins
- .doc or .rtf file format only
- The introduction should be no more than half a page.
- The conclusion should only review the main points.

The paper should be a **standard five paragraph argumentative essay** (no more and no less than five paragraphs), which means an introduction, three body paragraphs, and a conclusion. **The thesis statement requirement**: *the last sentence* of the introduction should be the *complete thesis statement* that clearly states your point of view. **The topic sentence requirement**: the first sentence of each body paragraph should act as a topic sentence and state the philosophical idea being analyzed.

TERM PAPER RUBRIC	
0-20 points	Meets the thesis statement and topic sentence requirements in the instructions
0-20 points	The paper is an argumentative essay, includes a clear point of view, and includes strong and persuasive logical support.
0-20 points	Moral theory plays a prominent role in the paper, for example utilitarianism, Kant, virtue theory, etc.
0-20 points	Multiple, relevant connections are made to course material.
0-20 points	Grammar is polished, and citation style conforms to Chicago Manual of Style.

Cases of plagiarism earn an automatic zero and a possible F in the course. Plagiarized papers may be sent to UT Tyler Judicial Affairs to receive additional consequences.

If you receive help from the Writing Center on an early draft and use the information to revise your paper, I will award you five extra credit points in the extra credit column, which amounts to half a letter grade on the paper. In order to receive extra credit, you must opt in to "email instructor" when you visit the Center. If I don't receive an e-mail from the Writing Center, you will not receive credit. The Writing Center is often busy, so you must plan ahead and make an appointment. No exceptions will be made if you are too late in making your appointment.

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Tentative schedule

The following schedule is a broad outline of the semester. It doesn't contain due dates, exam dates, or schedule changes. *Students should follow and regularly consult the schedule posted on the course home page in Canvas to see specific dates, additional assignments, and to stay up to date with important changes to the schedule.*

Week 1: *Ethics in a Nutshell*, chapters 1-3 | Zell Krazinsky article | Complete self-introduction post
Week 2: *Ethics in a Nutshell*, chapters 4-6

Week 3: *Ethics in a Nutshell*, chapters 7-9 (discussion boards start)

Week 4: *Justice*, Chapters 1 and 2

Week 5: *Justice*, Chapters 3 and 4

Week 6: *Justice*, Chapters 5 and 6

Week 7: *Justice*, Chapters 7 and 8

Week 8: *Justice*, Chapters 9 and 10

Week 9: *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics*, Chapters 2 and 3

Week 10: *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics*, Chapters 4 and 5

Week 11: *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics*, Chapters 6 and 7

Week 12: *Contemporary Debates in Applied Ethics*, Chapters 10 and 11 (last discussion board)

Week 13: Research & Writing Week

Week 14: Paper Due

Important Information:

UT Tyler Honor Code
Every member of the UT Tyler community joins together to embrace: Honor and integrity that will not allow me to lie, cheat, or steal, nor to accept the actions of those who do.

UT Tyler is committed to exploring and using artificial intelligence (AI) tools as appropriate for the discipline and task undertaken. We encourage discussing AI tools' ethical, societal, philosophical, and disciplinary implications. All uses of AI should be acknowledged as this aligns with our commitment to honor and integrity, as noted in UT Tyler's Honor Code. Faculty and students must not use protected information, data, or copyrighted materials when using any AI tool. Additionally, users should be aware that AI tools rely on predictive models to generate content that may appear correct but is sometimes shown to be incomplete, inaccurate, taken without attribution from other sources, and/or biased. Consequently, an AI tool should not be considered a substitute for traditional approaches to research. You are ultimately responsible for the quality and content of the information you submit. Misusing AI tools that violate the guidelines specified for this course (see below) is considered a breach of academic integrity. The student will be subject to disciplinary actions as outlined in UT Tyler's Academic Integrity Policy. **For this course, AI is not permitted in this course at all.** For this class, I want you to develop particular writing and argumentative skills that are different from the ways that AI typically generates content. Learning to express your own ideas in thoughtful and clear ways is an important goal of this course.

Course Policies:

Late work policy: Papers must be uploaded to Canvas by the deadline. A penalty of half a letter grade per day up to two letter grades will be assessed for late papers. This penalty will be waived only under special circumstances (e.g. a serious illness accompanied by a doctor's note). *The same applies for test make-ups.*

Communication policy: The best way to communicate with the instructor is through UT Tyler e-mail 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.

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.

Extra credit policy: Extra credit may be offered by the instructor from time to time, but extra credit is not given on demand or by request. Students do not have a right to it; for example, the instructor is not obligated to provide extra credit opportunities that work with a student's schedule or as make-up for a missed opportunity. Extra credit opportunities may only occur at certain times during the semester and will not be available during finals week or the previous week.

"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 or the week prior. A request for an "incomplete" may be approved only if (1) the request is made prior to the second to last exam, (2) the student has a valid reason, e.g. a verifiable medical condition, and (3) the student has a C or higher at the time the request for an "incomplete" is made. The terms of satisfying an "incomplete" will be set by the instructor.

Additional policies and expectations:
- Students will set up their Canvas accounts so that they will be aware of announcements sent out via the Canvas e-mail tool. The instructor will use this means of communication weekly. If students have not received an e-mail announcement after the first or second week of class, they should assume something is not working correctly and should contact technical support.
- Students will e-mail the instructor with questions.
- Students will not wait until the drop deadline to discuss lower than expected grades on assignments; instead, the student will take the initiative early in the semester to meet with the instructor to discuss ways of improving.
- Students will meet with the instructor during office hours or by appointment if extra help is needed on assignments.

- Students will access the Canvas toolkit. The toolkit is intended to provide you extra study resources if you find yourself struggling with the material.
- Students will complete assignments on time.
- Students will participate in a civil and respectful way.
- Plagiarism and cheating will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is cheating; it is taking credit for material that is not your own whether it is copied from a classmate, textbook, or online source. **Using AI generated writing and presenting it as your own is also plagiarism.** Plagiarism will result in an F on the assignment and a possible F in the course. It could also mean suspension from the university. So, students should be sure to use proper citations and do their own work. If students are not sure whether something constitutes plagiarism, they should contact the instructor to ask about it before submitting the assignment. The penalty will apply whether the act of plagiarism is intentional or not. Anyway, **it is really bad karma to cheat in an ethics class**.
- Students will declare that they have read and understood this syllabus by including a statement to this effect in a self-introduction post that will be posted to the discussion board "Meet Your Classmates" during the first week of class.

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.