Ethical Theory

PHIL 4302

Instructor Information

Instructor

Dr. Justin Morton

Email

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Office Hours

Tues/Thurs. 3:30 – 4:30

Office:

Phone number (office):

General Information

Catalog Description

This course explores some of the most important ethical ideas by philosophers both Eastern and Western and serves as a pillar for courses in applied ethics, law, and political philosophy.

Course Objectives

- Understand and articulate ethical theories, such as utilitarianism, Kantian ethics, and Aristotelian virtue ethics
- Understand and articulate the details of such theories, as well as interpretive debates about each
- Reconstruct philosophical arguments for ethical positions using the tools of deductive logic
- Apply ethical theories to cases
- Give novel arguments for and against positions in ethics
- Analyze and evaluate extant arguments for positions in ethics
- Teach one's peers by summarizing and highlighting central questions for discussion

Course Materials

Required Materials

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Hackett Publishing
- Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Hackett Publishing
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Hackett Publishing

All other materials will be made available on Canvas

Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Readings and Major Assignments
Week 1	Introduction and Syllabus Aristotle	Aristotle: Book 1
Week 2	Aristotle	Aristotle: Book 2 Aristotle: Book 7, chs. 1-10
Week 3	Aristotle	Aristotle: Books 3-4
Week 4	Aristotle Kant	Aristotle: Book 8 Kant: Section 1
Week 5	Kant	Kant: Section 1 (cont'd) and Section 2
Week 6	Kant	Kant: "On a Supposed Right to Lie Because of Philanthropic Concerns" (supplement at end of *Grounding*)
Week 7	Kant Midterm	Kant: reading TBD (Tuesday) **Midterm** in Class Thursday
Week 8	Mill	Mill: Ch. 1
Week 9	Mill	Mill: Ch. 2
Week 10	Mill	Mill: Ch. 4
Week 11	Nietzsche	*Nietzsche: Genealogy of Morals, Book 1
Week 12	Nietzsche	Nietzsche: Genealogy of Morals, Book 2

Week	Topic	Readings and Major Assignments
Week 13	Nietzsche	Reading TBD
Week 14	Eastern Ethics	*Confucian reading, distributed on Canvas
Week 15	**Final Exam**	Final Exam Thursday, April 30, 12:30-2:30 PM

Evaluation

Midterm| 25%

Final Exam| 30%

Summary-and-Question Assignments|20%

Question-of-the-Day Responses | 15%

Teach a Mini-Class | 10%

*Extra credit: You can receive 5 points on your final grade if you successfully avoid *all* use of electronic devices (phones, computers, tablets, etc.) in class for the duration of the semester.

Midterm. This will cover Aristotle and Kant and will be a mixture of types of question, mostly short answer and essay. It will be taken in class and with pen/pencil and paper alone.

Final Exam. This will be cumulative and will be a mixture of types of question, mostly short answer and essay. It will be taken in class and with pen/pencil and paper alone.

Summary-and-Question Assignments. You will complete several of these throughout the semester. You will closely study the day's reading ahead of class and create a short summary of a main issue/argument. You will end by asking a question for discussion. (A guide will be posted to Canvas.)

Question-of-the-Day Responses. These will resemble verbal short-answer quizzes. We will start most classes with one, and one student will answer each day. They will test basic knowledge of the day's reading assignment. Each student will answer several of these throughout the semester.

Teach a Mini-Class. Each student will lead the first 30 minutes of one class during the semester. (I will take over afterward.) The student will schedule a meeting with me ahead of the class to go over an outline. (The Summary-and-Question Assignments are meant, in part, to prepare you for this assignment.)

Grading Scale

A: 90-100%

B: 80-89%

C: 70-79%

D: 60-69%

F: 0-59%

Course Policies

AI Use

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, I expect all work students submit for this course to be their own. I have carefully designed all assignments and class activities to support your learning. Doing your own work, without human or artificial intelligence assistance, is best for your efforts in mastering course learning objectives. For this course, I expressly forbid using ChatGPT or any other artificial intelligence (AI) tools for any stages of the work process, including brainstorming. Deviations from these guidelines will be considered a violation of UT Tyler's Honor Code and academic honesty values.

Attendance

Attendance has no designated percentage of the course grade. However, quizzes are given in-class and cannot be made up; similarly with argument reconstructions, the case study, virtue journal entries, and the midterm.

In addition, I will drop you from the course if you are counted absent and unexcused for more than 6 classes.

Arriving late or leaving early by more than 10 minutes will be counted as an absence, unless excused in consultation with the instructor. Please arrive on time and stay for the duration of the class. Anything else is disruptive. If you foresee having to violate this policy, see me ahead of time; if an emergency arises and you can't consult me ahead of time, follow up as soon as possible via email.

If you miss a class, there is no need to email asking to be caught up on what you missed. Make sure you have completed all reading/assignments, and attend office hours if you have any questions.

Cell Phone/Computer Use

I expect phones to be put away for the entirety of class, unless you are accessing an e-book. Laptops and tablets should be used only for class-related material (e.g., e-books, notes). Excessive use of such devices for purposes unrelated to class will result in being counted absent for the day (in which case, see the attendance policy). All devices will be put entirely away for quizzes and argument reconstructions, which are completed on paper.

Communication Policy

I communicate outside of class primarily over email. I will reply to emails within 48 hours (not counting weekends/holidays). Sometimes an email slips through the cracks—I get a lot of email. If you haven't gotten a reply in this timeframe, you will not offend me by politely sending another reminder email.

Makeup exams

Exams can be made up in the case of, but only in the case of an excused absence. The excusability of the absence must be documented. This should be addressed as early as possible ahead of the absence. However, in rare cases an emergency prevents coordination ahead of time, and in such cases I don't expect advance notice/documentation (though such is still required as early as is reasonable after the absence). See me to coordinate.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism in any form will not be tolerated. In cases where it occurs, penalties may range from failure of the assignment to failure of the course. You will also be turned in to UT-Tyler's Office of Student Conduct and Intervention, and the university will assess further penalties. You are responsible for knowing what counts as plagiarism, and penalties will be assessed regardless of intent.