

PHIL 2010: Introduction to Ethics

Revised 2015-01-19

Term: Spring 2016 CRN: 13282 Meets: Monday & Wednesday from 4 pm - 5:40pm Room: 4204 Dunbar Hall	Instructor: Jonathan Vajda E-mail: jonathan.m.vajda@wmich.edu Office: 3020 Moore Office Hours: Wednesdays, 1-3pm & by appt. Email is the best way to contact me.
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Course Description

From the course catalog: "An introduction to the philosophic study of morality. Deals with questions such as: What is the good life? Why should I be moral? What is the meaning of right and wrong?"

This course satisfies General Education Area II: Humanities

Course Learning Outcomes

- 1) Students will explore, through reading, discussion, and writing, the philosophical traditions of morality and ethical theories, which have sought to answer questions such as: What is the good life? Why should I be moral? What is the meaning of right and wrong?
- 2) Students will critically assess traditional arguments and positions offered as answers to the above questions
- 3) Students will practice crafting and assessing their own arguments and positions in response to the above questions

Course Materials

You will need two books for this course, both are available at the WMU bookstore:

- 1) *The Fundamentals of Ethics* (3rd edition) by Russ Shafer-Landau
- 2) *The Ethical Life* (3rd edition) by Russ Shafer-Landau
- 3) Other materials will be provided on eLearning website as needed
<http://elearning.wmich.edu/>

Assignments

Your final grade will be based on the following assignments:

Class participation – in class	(10%)
Class participation – on eLearning, 10 posts	(25%)
Reading Quizzes – 6 total, lowest dropped	(25%)
Mid-term Exam	(20%)
Final Exam	(20%)

Class Participation: in Class. If you don't show up to class regularly, it will be hard for me to give you full participation credit. If you show up regularly but don't participate, it will be hard for me to give you *any* credit. If you show up to class regularly *and* contribute to discussion by asking questions, raising objections, etc., then there's a good chance you'll get full credit. (Inappropriate class behavior can affect participation credit; see below)

Class Participation: on eLearning. You are expected to post ten (10) forum entries on eLearning. They should be about 100-200 words. You should try to do about one a week starting with the second week; they are due, however, on the last day of class, before lecture (**April 20, 4pm**).

A good post on the eLearning forum must do at least one of the following:

1. Critically evaluate the reading. For example, maybe you think an argument in one of the readings relies on a poorly supported claim, example, or analogy. A good forum post would point this out and explain why you think the argument is faulty. And, if you want to defend the position, you could offer a way for the author to fix the argument.
2. Relate something we've read to something that's going on in the world. For example, bioethics is a hot topic, and there are always news articles popping up on the major news websites that are relevant to our class. Maybe post a link to an article that catches your interest, and show how it relates to the class in some way (e.g. show how certain bioethical principles apply in the case the story covers, etc.)
3. Ask a detailed (perhaps multi-part) question about the content of one of the readings. Often your classmates will be able to offer helpful replies, and this also gets good discussions and debates going.
4. Ask a detailed (perhaps multi-part) question about the content from lecture. Often questions come to mind after class, or time constraints prevent some from fitting in. A good question will strive to be as clear as possible what is (or is not) being asked.
5. Respond to other people's forum posts. Replies count just as much as original posts as long as they're written with the same virtues in mind.

Shoot for 150 words. Forum posts can be longer than 200 words, but no less than 100. A post with insufficient content will yield a half-grade on the assignment; no exceptions. If you quote a source, you must cite it (page, author; URL, if applicable). No more than 10 words from a quote will count toward the post's word-count. You will receive feedback for your first post, after which "no news is good news." [*More instructions will be on eLearning*]

Quizzes. There will be six (6) short, unannounced quizzes throughout the semester. The lowest grade will be automatically dropped. They are designed to make sure that you're keeping up with the reading. These quizzes are not designed to be difficult: read the assigned texts completely and attend class on time.

Exams. There will be two (2) exams throughout the semester. The format is yet to be determined, but will involve synthesis of readings. (Have I stressed how critical the required reading is yet?) Also, the final exam is *not* cumulative. Feel free to celebrate.

Grading Guidelines

I'll assign final grades with the following interpretations:

100-90	A	4.0	74-70	C	2.0
89-85	BA	3.5	69-65	DC	1.5
84-80	B	3.0	64-60	D	1.0
79-75	CB	2.5	59-0	E	0.0

Reporting progress. If I figure out how to make grades available to you online, I intend to post your raw scores for the exams and quizzes. Beyond that, I won't be reporting class participation. In the case of forum posts, consider "no news is good news" after my initial feedback.

Extra Credit. I will accept additional class participation on eLearning at the rate of 1/5 the normal weight of a post (2.5% normal -> 0.5% extra credit). Posts for extra credit must meet the same standards as normal posts that get full credit; no partial extra credit will be given. All posts for extra credit on eLearning are due at the same time as the other participation (**April 20, 4pm**). That is, before the last lecture begins.

Other opportunities for extra credit will be available throughout the semester; they will be posted on eLearning and announced in class. I may include extra credit on the exams, but since the format is yet TBD I reserve the right to include or not include at my discretion.

Late, Absences, and Emergencies

Late submissions. Assignments will not be accepted late. Quizzes are due in class, eLearning participation is due April 20, at 4pm, and the exams are due according to their respective schedule.

Absent submissions. I cannot give a non-zero for work that is not submitted. If you are absent class without excuse when a quiz is distributed, anticipate a zero on that assignment. Good news: the lowest quiz is dropped.

Absent from class. Absences from classes will negatively affect your learning as well as your participation grade.

Emergencies. Family die. We lose our health. We are burdened to the point of being crushed. If any emergencies like these happen, let me know via email as soon as possible – the more notice I have, the better. Notices after the fact will *not* be honored. E.g., if you miss class due to health, I expect an email before the end of class. For accommodating exams, I need verification (a doctor's note, an obit, etc.). We'll sort out a reasonable accommodation. Non-emergencies include but are not limited to unexpected visitors, a bad breakup, volunteering for a work shift that conflicts, and other cases of similar severity.

Again, the rule is email me ASAP. Address your pressing need. After that, we'll nail down accommodations, and you will fulfill what we agree to.

Professionalism in the Classroom

You are expected to behave in a respectful and professional manner at all times in the classroom. This includes attendance, punctuality, preparedness, attentiveness, participation, and courtesy to your classmates.

Electronic devices. They are not required. When are they permitted? *Only in such case as they are used to further your education in the subject matter we are discussing in class.* Otherwise, they should be kept put away during class. I highly, highly recommend taking notes with pencil and notebook.

Phones should be on silent or off, not vibrate or ringtone. Exception: anticipated emergencies (e.g., correspondence regarding a family member in a hospital), or you are an emergency worker who relies on immediate response.

If you get distracted with other activities (games, videos, chat, email, surfing, etc.), then *for you* the policy is to put the device away. Moreover, you should consider the attention of your classmates: use of such devices during class disrupts the learning process for your fellow students. Think, if someone sees you on Facebook or Tinder or YouTube, it derails their train of thought and attention, and philosophy requires sustained thought. You're hampering not just yourself, but others.

Quiz: What is permitted in this classroom? Select all that apply:

- a) Checking texts
- b) Listening to Ariana Grande or Adele with your ear buds
- c) Fact-checking something the instructor said
- d) Typing up notes on your tablet, laptop, or other electronic device
- e) Emailing another instructor

Respectful Disagreements. We'll be talking about some controversial topics in this course, and when we do so it is expected that each student will be respectful of the opinions and beliefs of others. Disagreement must be carried out in accordance with a shared desire for learning. But please feel free to disagree!

Academic Dishonesty

You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the Undergraduate and Graduate Catalogs that pertain to Academic Honesty. These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. [The policies can be found at <http://catalog.wmich.edu> under Academic Policies, Student Rights and Responsibilities.] If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s). If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with your instructor if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

Students With Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the Disabilities Services for Students center at the beginning of the semester; contact information is here: <http://www.wmich.edu/disabilityservices/index.html>. A disability determination must be made by this office before accommodations are provided by the instructor.

Religious Observances

The following constitutes university policy with respect to religious observances and course obligations.

The University is a diverse, multicultural enterprise and, as a community, we jointly embrace both individual responsibility and dignified respect for our differences. It is our general policy to permit students to fulfill obligations set aside by their faith.

It is our intent that students who must be absent from scheduled classes to fulfill religious obligations or observe practices associated with their faith not be disadvantaged. However, it is the student's responsibility to make arrangements with his/her instructors in advance. It is in the student's best interests to approach each instructor expeditiously and with sufficient notice that the rights and responsibilities of the instructor are not disrupted. Instructors should make it known to classes early in the term what they consider reasonable notice for anticipated absences. Without specifying a fixed notification time, we acknowledge in this policy joint responsibility: instructors will inform students of their requirements and students will make every effort to cause no disruption in the instructors' plans and duties.

Instructors should assume that a claim of religious observance has veracity, especially when advance notice is provided by the student. Students likewise must recognize that it is their responsibility to meet all their course obligations. Instructors are not obligated to provide materials to students unless these materials would have normally been distributed to the entire class. For example, if an instructor does not normally post notes, a student cannot expect notes to be provided for lectures missed.