

PHL 275 H1S Introduction to Ethics

Instructor

Etye Steinberg

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Lecture Hours: Monday 12-3, Wednesday 12-2; RW 117.

Office Hours: Monday 10-11, Wednesday 10-11; JHB 419.

Teaching Assistants

Course Description:

What is the right thing to do? How should we live our lives? Do we have a duty to act morally? What does 'acting morally' mean? These questions seem extremely important to us, not only as philosophers, but much more importantly, as people living our lives in the world. These and related questions are at the heart of this course. In this course, we will discuss two main questions: (1) what is the right/good? and (2) is there any such thing as the right/good? After introducing two cases that will accompany our discussion throughout the course, we will move on to review – and critically evaluate – different views in moral philosophy regarding what is the good, and what is the right thing to do. We will discuss virtue ethics, deontology, and consequentialism: their historical formulations and their current, refined versions. We will then discuss challenges to morality. According to egoism, for instance, we never act on altruistic motives. Others may say that there is no objective sense of 'good' or 'bad', given widespread disagreement between different people and different societies and cultures about what is good or bad. We conclude the course by examining how ethical theories can be applied to the real-world examples with which we began our course.

Required Readings:

- Immanuel Kant (2011[1785]) *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* 2nd ed. (M. Gregor, trans., J. Timmerman, ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

All other readings will be made available through blackboard.

Students must cover the relevant readings before each lecture and tutorial, and bring the texts to lecture and tutorial.

Course Evaluation:

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| 1. Lecture participation | 5% |
| 2. Tutorial participation | 10% |
| 3. 5 Short papers (400-600 words) | 50% |
| 4. Final exam | 35% |

Important Dates:

July 10th: Last day to add S courses.

July 31st: Last day to drop S courses.

August 7th: Civic Holiday (no classes).

Paper Submission Deadlines: July 12th, July 19th, July 26th, August 2nd, August 14th.

TBA: Final exam.

Reading Schedule:

July 5: **Introduction** [total pages: 15]

- Derek Parfit (1984) “What Makes Someone’s Life Go Best”. In *Reasons and Persons*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. Appendix I. pp. 493-502.
- Robert Nozick (1974) “The Experience Machine”. In *Anarchy, State, Utopia*. New York, NY: Basic Books, pp. 42-45.

July 10: **Consequentialism** [total pages: ~40-45]

- John Stuart Mill, *On Utilitarianism*, Ch. 2.
- Philippa Foot (1967) “The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect”. In *Virtues and Vices*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 20-32.

Suggested reading:

- Judith Jarvis Thomson (1976) “Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem”. *The Monist*, 59:204-17.
- Russ Shafer-Landau (2014) *The Fundamentals of Ethics* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch. 9-10.

July 12: **Virtue Ethics (1)** [total pages: 37]

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I, II. Roger Crisp (trans.) Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

*** **Paper 1 due** ***

July 17: **Virtue Ethics (2)** [total pages: 40]

- Rosalind Hursthouse (1999) *On Virtue Ethics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch. 2.
- Julia Driver (2001) *Uneasy Virtue*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ch. 4.

July 19: **Deontology (1)** [total pages: 28]

- Immanuel Kant (1785) *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, section I. [4:393-405]
- Russ Shafer-Landau (2014) *The Fundamentals of Ethics* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch. 11.

*** **Paper 2 due** ***

July 24: **Deontology (2)** [total pages: 38]

- Immanuel Kant (1785) *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, section II. [4:421-440]
- Russ Shafer-Landau (2014) *The Fundamentals of Ethics* (3rd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch. 12.

July 26: **Challenges to Morality (1) Egoism** [total pages: ~20]

- Plato, *The Republic*, 359a-360d ("Ring of Gyges"). G.M.A. Grube, C.D.C. Reeve (trans.), in John Cooper (ed.) (1997) *Plato: Complete Works*. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing. 1000-1.
- Robert Shaver (2015) "Egoism" (ONLY sections 1 and 2). *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2015 Edition), Edward N. Zalta (ed.),
URL=<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2015/entries/egoism/>

*** **Paper 3 due** ***

July 31: **Challenges to Morality (2) Disagreement and Relativism** [total pages: 22]

- James Rachels (1986) *The Elements of Moral Philosophy* Ch. 2.
- Jesse Prinz (2011) "Morality is a Culturally Conditioned Response". *Philosophy Now* 82.
URL=[https://philosophynow.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/issues/82/Morality is a Culturally Conditioned Response](https://philosophynow.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/issues/82/Morality%20is%20a%20Culturally%20Conditioned%20Response)

August 2: **Challenges to Morality (3) Moral Nihilism** [total pages: 18]

- Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Essay 1, sections 10, 11, 13; Essay 2, sections 4, 5, 16, 21, 22.
- J.L. Mackie (1977) *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, section 1.9

*** **Paper 4 due** ***

August 9: **Cases (1) Poverty** [total pages: 15]

- Peter Singer (1972) "Famine, Affluence, and Morality". *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1:229-43.

August 14: **Cases (2) Euthanasia** [total pages: 20]

- Francis Kamm (1999) "Physician-Assisted Suicide, the Doctrine of Double Effect, and the Ground of Value". *Ethics* 109:586-605.

*** **Paper 5 due** ***

Policies:

- 1) **Paper Submission:** Papers should be submitted through Blackboard. Late papers will be penalized 5% per day, including weekends.

Submission deadlines: July 12th, July 19th, July 26th, August 2nd, August 14th.

If you must miss an assignment deadline for medical or other valid reasons, you should inform me in advance. When circumstances do not permit this (e.g. in an emergency), you must inform me as soon as possible. Students who wish special academic consideration for health reasons must submit a completed University of Toronto Student Medical Certificate, available at: <http://www.healthservice.utoronto.ca/pdfs/medcert.htm>. Students who wish special academic consideration on other grounds must submit relevant supporting documentation. Alternate arrangements will be made only in the case of circumstances that are both legitimate and unforeseeable. Examples of circumstances that do not meet one or both of these conditions are: extra-curricular activities, employment obligations, and deadlines in other courses.

Paper submission through Blackboard will go automatically through Turnitin.com for a review of textual similarity and detection of possible plagiarism. In doing so, students will allow their essays to be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database, where they will be used solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism. The terms that apply to the

University's use of the Turnitin.com service are described on the Turnitin.com web site. You can find the guide for student use here:

<http://www.teaching.utoronto.ca/teaching/academicintegrity/turnitin/guide-students.htm>

Submission work via TurnItIn is voluntary. If you choose to opt-out of using TurnItIn, you must notify me of your decision within 1 week of receiving the assignment, submit hard copies of all your notes and rough drafts used to create your final paper, and meet with me to talk about the research methods you utilized in writing your paper.

2) Academic Integrity:

Academic integrity is a core value of academic work and research. Without abiding to rules of academic integrity, research becomes worthless. If an experiment's results are forged, then that experiment cannot be useful in future work; if a paper does not properly cite its sources, then the continuous thread of knowledge is torn. This applies to the work of everyone taking part in the project of academia: from full time faculty members publishing papers in peer-reviewed journals, through graduate students and research assistants taking their first steps in research, and all the way to first year undergraduate students writing short essays.

The University of Toronto treats cases of academic misconduct very seriously. Academic integrity is a fundamental value of learning and scholarship at the UofT. Participating honestly, respectfully, responsibly, and fairly in this academic community ensures that your UofT degree is valued and respected as a true signifier of your individual academic achievement.

The University of Toronto's [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#) outlines the behaviours that constitute academic misconduct, the processes for addressing academic offences, and the penalties that may be imposed. You are expected to be familiar with the contents of this document. Potential offences include, but are not limited to:

In papers and assignments:

- Using someone else's ideas or words without appropriate acknowledgement.
- Submitting your own work in more than one course without the permission of the instructor.
- Making up sources or facts.
- Obtaining or providing unauthorized assistance on any assignment (this includes working in groups on assignments that are supposed to be individual work).

On tests and exams:

- Using or possessing any unauthorized aid, including a cell phone.
- Looking at someone else's answers.
- Letting someone else look at your answers.
- Misrepresenting your identity.
- Submitting an altered test for re-grading.

Misrepresentation:

- Falsifying or altering any documentation required by the University, including (but not limited to) doctor's notes.
- Falsifying institutional documents or grades.

All suspected cases of academic dishonesty will be investigated following the procedures outlined in the [Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters](#). If you have any questions about

what is or is not permitted in this course, please do not hesitate to contact me. If you have questions about appropriate research and citation methods, you are expected to seek out additional information from me or other available campus resources like the [College Writing Centres](#), the [Academic Success Centre](#), or the [U of T Writing Website](#).

- 3) **Accessibility Services:** Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and Accessibility Services at <http://www.accessibility.utoronto.ca>. The earlier you make us aware of any potential accessibility issues, the more help we can provide.