

The following syllabus is a proposed syllabus for a semester-long writing-intensive introduction to ethical theory; it is designed as a “gateway course” to upper-division courses in moral philosophy, providing philosophy majors and minors with a foundation in historical and contemporary ethical theory.

Introduction to Ethical Theory (writing-intensive lower-division gateway course)

INTRODUCTION TO ETHICAL THEORY

Meetings: TBA
Instructor: Jonathan Gingerich, jgingerich@humnet.ucla.edu
TAs: TBA
Cell: [see course website] (I’m unlikely to answer texts and calls after 7 PM)
Office Hours: TBA
Website: TBA

Course Description

What is the best way to live? How should we live together with other people? What obligations do we have to one another? What does it mean when we say that we have a moral duty to do something or avoid doing something? And what *is* morality?

This course will provide a historical introduction to how philosophers have approached these big questions in ethics. As we consider different answers that have been proposed to these questions, we will practice formulating and criticizing philosophical arguments. This is a writing intensive course, which will provide the students the opportunity to practice thinking through these ethical questions in writing as well as the opportunity to workshop and revise their philosophical writing.

Students who complete this course will be well-prepared for upper-division courses in both the history of moral philosophy and contemporary ethics and political philosophy.

Texts

The following books need to be purchased for this course:

Plato, *Republic*, translated by C.D.C. Reeve, ISBN 978-0-87220-736-3

David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, edited by J.B. Schneewind, ISBN 978-0915145454

Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, translated by Mary Gregor and Jens Timmermann, ISBN 978-1107401068.

Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, translated by Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen, ISBN 978-0872202832.

Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, translated by Bernard Frechtman, ISBN 978-1480442801.

All other readings will be available on the course website.

These books will be available through the campus bookstore, and they are available used from Amazon and many other online booksellers. You will also need a notebook for the commonplace book assignment (described below). If it is difficult for you to obtain these texts for financial reasons or otherwise, please contact me and I will make arrangements to ensure that you have access to the texts.

It is important that you get a copy of the precise edition of these books listed here (that is, your copy should have the ISBN number listed above), because our discussion of these books will go best if everyone is working with the same page numbers.

It is essential that you complete the assigned reading in advance of the lectures that are devoted to the material. Many of the texts are dense, and I encourage you to read them at least twice. We'll discuss strategies for reading these texts during the first week of class.

Screen Free Classroom

To avoid distractions and to promote lively participation, thoughtful note taking, and good cheer, I ask that you bring (1) a paper notepad, (2) a writing utensil, and (3) a paper copy of the reading to every class meeting, and **refrain from using your cell phones, tablets, and laptops in class**. Please notify me if special circumstances, such as an injury or a disability, require you to take notes electronically. Please also notify me if obtaining hard copies of the course materials poses a problem for you.

Graded Coursework

- 5% Attendance and participation
- 15% Reading response assignments
- 20% First essay (4-5 pages)
 - Breakdown of first grade:
 - 5% First draft (pass/fail)
 - 15% Peer editing assignment
 - 80% Final draft
- 20% Final exam
- 40% Final essay (7-8 pages)
 - Breakdown of final essay grade:
 - 5% First draft (pass/fail)
 - 10% First peer editing assignment
 - 5% Second draft (pass/fail)
 - 10% Second peer editing assignment
 - 70% Final draft

Participation

By attending class and talking through the texts that we read with me and your fellow students, you will improve your ability to clearly orally articulate views and arguments about political philosophy. To participate effectively, it is essential to carefully read the assigned reading before section meetings.

Attendance and participation grades will be based on engagement in class discussion, including actively listening to and supportively engaging with other participants, arriving fully prepared for discussion, and routinely making comments that advance the discussion. Failure to attend class, failure to participate, and failure to engage with other participants can negatively affect your section attendance

and participation grade, while particularly insightful contributions and attentive engagement with other participants can positively affect your grade. I will advise you of where your participation grade stands throughout the quarter.

Reading Response Assignments

The reading response assignments may be found on the course website; each assignment asks you to answer a few short questions about the day's reading and should take a page or two to complete. Reading response assignments must be submitted on the course website by **9:00 AM** on the day specified on the course schedule. Answers to the reading response assignments will be distributed on the course website.

Grading: Reading responses assignments will not be graded individually, however, a grade will be assigned based on the number of reading response assignments that you complete. A total of sixteen reading responses are assigned for the course. If thirteen of sixteen are completed, the student will receive an A. If twelve, an A-; if eleven a B+ . . . if four, a D; if none, an F. Late assignments and email submissions will not be accepted under any circumstances. Turning in anything other than your own good-faith attempt to answer the questions will earn an F for the category (and may result in further disciplinary action).

Examinations

There will be a **final exam**. Details will be provided near the end of the term.

Essays

Two essays are required: a first essay of 4-5 pages, double spaced on an assigned topic, and a final essay of 7-8 pages, double-spaced, on a topic of your choosing that grows out of one of our meetings or reading in the first half of the course.

First Essay

Topics: Topics for the first essay will be announced at the end of week 4.

Rough Draft: **A rough, partial draft of the first essay (around 3-4 pages long) is due through the course website by 5:00 PM on Friday of week 5. Also bring two hard copies to class for our first lecture in week 6.** This draft will not be letter-graded: everyone who turns in a satisfactory draft by the deadline will get full credit, whereas those not turning in a draft will receive a zero for this portion of the grade. You must complete your draft on time to participate in the peer editing exercise.

Peer Editing Exercise: We will have a **collaborative editing exercise in class for our first lecture of week 6.** In addition to the in-class exercise, you will **submit written comments on another student's paper by 5:00 pm on Friday of week 6.** You will submit your comments by email to your partner as well as through the course website. Because your partner will rely on your comments in revising their paper, extensions will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances.

Final Draft: The final draft of the first essay is **due on the course website by 5:00 PM on Friday of week 7.**

Final Essay

Paper Topic: A **proposed topic is due through the course website by 5:00 PM on Friday of week 9**. The proposed topic should be a one-paragraph abstract or statement of a question that you plan to discuss in your term paper. This topic is not a commitment, and you may change your mind about your topic, but you will receive feedback on your proposed topic to help you improve your final paper.

First Draft: You will develop your essay ideas by helping one another with feedback on a rough draft. Giving feedback on your peers' writing also helps you to take up the perspective of the reader in thinking through what makes for a good philosophy essay. To be ready for the collaborative editing process, you will submit a **rough, partial draft of your final essay (around 5-6 pages long), due on the course website by 5 PM on Friday of week 11. Also bring two hard copies to class for our first lecture in week 12**. This draft will not be letter-graded: everyone who turns in a satisfactory draft by the deadline will get full credit, whereas those not turning in a draft will receive a zero for this portion of the grade. You must complete your draft on time to participate in the week 11 peer editing exercise.

Peer Editing Exercise, First Draft: We will have a **collaborative editing exercise in class for our first lecture of week 12**. This exercise will be a "big picture" writing exercise, with the aim of improving the structure and ideas in first drafts of the final essay. In addition to the in-class exercise, you will **submit written comments on another student's paper by 5:00 pm on Friday of week 12**. You will submit your comments by email to your partner as well as through the course website. Because your partner will rely on your comments in revising their paper, extensions will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances.

Second Draft: You will rewrite your final essay in light of the comments that you receive in our week 12 peer editing workshop, and **you will submit a complete (7-8 page) second draft of the final essay on the course website by 5 PM on Friday of week 13. Also bring two hard copies to class for our first lecture in week 14**. This draft will not be letter-graded: everyone who turns in a satisfactory draft by the deadline will get full credit, whereas those not turning in a draft will receive a zero for this portion of the grade. You must complete your draft on time to participate in the week 14 peer editing exercise.

Peer Editing Exercise, First Draft: We will have a **collaborative editing exercise in class for our first lecture of week 14**. This exercise will focus on sharpening the organization, argumentation, and style of second drafts of the final essay. In addition to the in-class exercise, you will **submit written comments on another student's paper by 5:00 pm on Friday of week 14**. You will submit your comments by email to your partner as well as through the course website. Because your partner will rely on your comments in revising their paper, extensions will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances.

Final Draft: The final draft of the final essay is **due on the course website by 5:00 PM on Friday of the final week of class**. Aside from last minute emergencies, extensions must be arranged at least 24 hours in advance. Essays will be graded using the rubric that appears at the end of this syllabus.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to abide by the university's policies on academic misconduct. A few important reminders about academic integrity are relevant to the writing assignments for this seminar: You should

write your own papers and properly attribute ideas and words that you include in your writing. If you copy someone else's words into your assignment word for word, indicate that these words are a quotation, by enclosing them in quotation marks or setting them off from the text. Also provide a citation that includes enough information that your reader could locate the material that you're citing. (I don't care what style of citation you use. For our course materials, you can just give the author's last name and a page number.) You should also provide a citation if you paraphrase someone else's idea in your own writing. If you have any questions about what constitutes academic misconduct, please ask.

Schedule of Lectures and Reading Assignments

- I. WEEK 1: Introduction
 - A. Lecture 1
 - 1. Syllabus
 - B. Lecture 2
 - 1. Plato, *Euthyphro* (Reading Response #1 due by 8:00 AM on course website)
- II. WEEK 2: Justice
 - A. Lecture 3
 - 1. Plato, *Republic* book I
 - B. Lecture 4
 - 1. Plato, *Republic* book II (RR #2 due)
- III. WEEK 3: Justice, Continued
 - A. Lecture 5
 - 1. Plato, *Republic* book IV (RR #3 due)
 - B. Lecture 6
 - 1. Plato, *Republic* book VI
- IV. WEEK 4: Justice, Continued
 - A. Lecture 7
 - 1. Plato, *Republic* book VII (RR #4 due)
 - B. Lecture 8
 - 1. Aristotle, *Politics*, book I and book III, ch 1-13
 - 2. **TOPICS FOR FIRST ESSAY ANNOUNCED**
- V. WEEK 5: Will-Based and Value-Based Ethics
 - A. Lecture 9
 - 1. Samuel Pufendorf, *On the Duty of Man and Citizen According to Natural Law*, book 1, ch 1-2
 - B. Lecture 10
 - 1. Jean Barbeyrac, *The Judgment of an Anonymous Writer on the Original of This Abridgment* (RR #5 due)
 - 2. **FIRST ESSAY FIRST DRAFT DUE ONLINE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**
- VI. WEEK 6: Modern Ethics
 - A. Lecture 11
 - 1. **PEER EDITING WORKSHOP IN CLASS (BRING TWO HARD COPIES OF YOUR ROUGH DRAFT TO CLASS)**
 - B. Lecture 12
 - 1. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, sections 1-3
 - 2. **PEER EDITING COMMENTS DUE TO YOUR PARTNER AND ONLINE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**
- VII. WEEK 7: Modern Ethics, Continued
 - A. Lecture 13
 - 1. Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals*, sections 4-6 (RR #6 due)

- B. Lecture 14
 1. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, preface and section 1 (RR #7 due)
 2. **FIRST ESSAY FINAL DRAFT DUE THROUGH TURNITIN BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**
- VIII.WEEK 8: Modern Ethics, Continued
 - A. Lecture 15
 1. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, section 2
 - B. Lecture 16
 1. Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, section 2, continued (RR #8 due)
- IX. WEEK 9: Utilitarianism
 - A. Lecture 17
 1. Bentham, *Principles of Morals and Legislation*, chapters 1 and 4 (RR #9 due)
 2. Nozick, "The Experience Machine"
 - B. Lecture 18
 1. Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter 2
 2. **PROPOSED FINAL ESSAY TOPICS DUE ONLINE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**
- X. WEEK 10: The Critique of Liberalism
 - A. Lecture 19
 1. Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, first essay (RR #10 due)
 - B. Lecture 20
 1. Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, second essay
- XI. WEEK 11: Criticisms of Liberalism, Continued
 - A. Lecture 21
 1. Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morality*, third essay (RR #11 due)
 - B. Lecture 22
 1. Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, sections 3-6
 2. **FINAL ESSAY FIRST DRAFT DUE ONLINE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**
- XII. WEEK 12: Existentialism and Ethics
 - A. Lecture 23
 1. **PEER EDITING WORKSHOP IN CLASS (BRING TWO HARD COPIES OF YOUR ROUGH DRAFT TO CLASS)**
 - B. Lecture 24
 1. Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, section 1 (RR #12 due)
 2. **PEER EDITING COMMENTS DUE TO YOUR PARTNER AND ONLINE BY 5:00 PM ON MONDAY**
- XIII.WEEK 13: Existentialism and Ethics, Continued
 - A. Lecture 25
 1. Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, section 2
 - B. Lecture 26
 1. Beauvoir, *Ethics of Ambiguity*, section 3 (RR #13 due)
 2. **FINAL ESSAY SECOND DRAFT DUE ONLINE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**
- XIV.WEEK 14: Contemporary Moral Theory
 - A. Lecture 27
 1. **PEER EDITING WORKSHOP IN CLASS (BRING TWO HARD COPIES OF YOUR ROUGH DRAFT TO CLASS)**
 - B. Lecture 28
 1. Rawls, "Outline of a Decision Procedure in Ethics" (RR #14 due)
 2. **PEER EDITING COMMENTS DUE TO YOUR PARTNER AND ONLINE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**
- XV. WEEK 15: Contemporary Moral Theory, Continued

- A. Lecture 29
 - 1. Thompson, “The Trolley Problem” (RR #15 due)

- B. Lecture 30
 - 1. Taurek, “Should the Numbers Count?” (RR #16 due)

XVI.WEEK 16: Ethics and Environment

- A. Lecture 31
 - 1. Leopold, “The Land Ethic” (RR #15 due)

- B. Lecture 32
 - 1. Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, chapter 1 (RR #16 due)
 - 2. **FINAL ESSAY DUE ONLINE BY 5:00 PM ON FRIDAY**

XVII.EXAM PERIOD

- A. **FINAL EXAMINATION (DATE AND TIME TBA)**

Grading Rubric for Essays

A, A-	Excellent essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is straightforward and easy to read. • Essay is clearly organized so that paragraphs clearly flow from one another and the reader is never lost. • Essay topic clearly sets out a significant philosophical problem or question and makes the reader care about it. • Exposition shows mastery of the philosophical materials used and conveys complete comprehension to the reader. Exposition provides a new point of access to the material discussed. • Essay advances an insightful, creative, or very thoughtful philosophical argument that is well supported. Demonstrates awareness of significant objections to the position it advances and responds effectively to them.
B+, B, B-	Good essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is readable, although some sentences may be difficult. • Essay is coherently organized, but the reader is sometimes lost. • Essay topic sets out a significant philosophical problem or question, although the essay may fail to show the reader why they should care about the topic. • Exposition of philosophical materials contains no major mistakes and effectively conveys the central arguments and themes to the reader. • Essay advances a philosophical argument and provides support for it although the argument might contain minor errors or need more development in places. Demonstrates independent thought about the topic and awareness of significant objections to the position it advances.
C+, C, C-	Adequate essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is very difficult but not impossible to read. Many sentences are convoluted or ungrammatical. • Essay is poorly organized and the reader is often lost. • Essay topic provides an opportunity to exposit and argue about course materials but is not otherwise philosophically significant. • Exposition shows a grasp of the central arguments and themes of the philosophical texts discussed but does not effectively convey it to the reader. • Essay advances a philosophical argument. There may be serious problems with the argument, but the argument has promise of amounting to more than mere counter-assertion. Essay rehashes reading or lecture material rather than demonstrating independent thought about the topic.
D+ or lower	Inadequate essay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing is very difficult but not impossible to read. Most sentences are convoluted or ungrammatical and it is very difficult for the reader to understand the author's meaning. • Essay is unorganized and it is unclear to the reader why one paragraph follows another. • Essay topic poses a coherent question but is unrelated to the philosophical or literary themes of the course. • Exposition fails to show a grasp of the central arguments and themes of the philosophical texts discussed. • Essay makes large argumentative errors or amounts to mere counter-assertion and fails to demonstrate original thought about the material.
F	Failing essay	Essay does not make a good faith effort to meet the requirements of the assignment.

Grading Rubric for Attendance and Participation

A	Excellent participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student almost always attends class.• Student is engaged in discussion, including actively listening to and supportively engaging with other participants, arriving fully prepared for discussion, and routinely making comments that advance the discussion.
B	Good participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student attends class most of the time.• Student treats other students respectfully but does not regularly engage with other participants or contribute to discussion.
C	Adequate participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student only irregularly attends class.• Student treats other students respectfully but does not regularly engage with other participants or contribute to discussion.
F	Inadequate participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Student never attends class or does not treat other students respectfully in discussion.