

Philosophy 202: Introduction to Ethics

Fall 2008

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Office Hours: 2:15-3:45MW
12:30-2:15Tues. & by appt.
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<http://www.uah.edu/colleges/liberal/philosophy/heikes/202.html>

Course Texts: Russ Shafer-Landau, *Whatever Happened to Good and Evil?*
Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*
Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*
John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Course Objectives:

Because ethics is a branch of philosophy that attempts to achieve a systematic understanding of how we ought to live and why, this course will have two major objectives.

(1) This course should provide you with a philosophical foundation for moral deliberation. Through our reading of several moral philosophers, you will become familiar with notable historical and contemporary views concerning the nature of good/bad and right/wrong. You will also learn how to read, analyze, and discuss ethical theories in order to present your own view and successfully argue for it.

(2) We will examine how these theories can help you come to terms with contemporary moral problems that we all face. You will be asked to think about your own view on current ethical and social controversies, and you will learn how to examine and defend your position using argumentative methods. By the end of the course, you should have the tools and abilities necessary to construct arguments on “real life” ethical issues and dilemmas.

Requirements:

*Exam on Intro and Schafer-Landau, Part I :	20%	
*Exam on Schafer-Landau, Part II and III:	20%	
*Exam on Mill:	20%	(*The lowest of these grades will
*Exam on Kant:	20%	be dropped.)
Final Exam, comprehensive with emphasis on Aristotle:	40%	(The final grade will not be dropped .)

Each of these exams will include some combination of true/false, multiple choice, short answer, and essay. The format of each test will be announced in advance, and there will always be at least one essay on every exam.

Expectations and Assessment:

Philosophy is a discipline that emphasizes clarity of thought and expression. Philosophy also demands reasons for one's conclusions. As a result, the assignments in this course will ask you to demonstrate the ability to clearly articulate philosophical ideas and to formulate arguments for your own philosophical conclusions. This will require you to learn to think critically about the issues and authors we cover.

The exams in this course will consist of some combination of true/false, multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. The true/false, multiple choice, and short answer questions are designed to test your understanding of and ability to explain the central ideas of the theories we discuss. The essay questions will ask you to critically think about those ideas and to defend your own ideas or interpretation of the text. You will be expected to clearly articulate philosophical problems and to critically respond to the arguments given by the philosophers we read. You need not agree with everything you read (in fact, many of the arguments we read will be mutually inconsistent), but you should be able to respond intelligently about why you agree or disagree with the arguments.

Course Outline: (the exact due dates for readings will be announced in class)

I. Introduction to Ethical Issues and Arguments (Weeks 1-2)

A. Handouts and web resources (check the course webpage for links to any readings)

II. Moral Objectivism v. Moral Relativism (aka Metaethics) (Weeks 2-7, two exams during this time)

--we will skip around the text as issues develop in class; come to class for current reading assignments

A. The Status of Morality (Shafer-Landau pp. 3-12)

EXAM

B. Against Moral Skepticism (Shafer-Landau pp. 15-54)

C. Moral Objectivity Defended (Shafer-Landau pp. 57-136)

EXAM

III. **Historical Views** (Weeks 8-15)

A. Mill and Utilitarianism (Mill pp. 1-40)

EXAM

B. Kant and Deontology (Kant pp. 1-48)

EXAM

C. Aristotle and Virtue Ethics (Aristotle pp. 1-196; 266-298)

FINAL EXAM

Miscellaneous Information:

Turn off all beepers, cellular phones, etc. before class, and under no circumstances should you answer your phone in class!

Class readings are subject to change at any time. Specific readings and the dates for which they are to be read will be announced in class.

Class attendance and participation is strongly advised. I will not assume that you will come to class with a full understanding of the material, but I do expect you to have informed questions. Reading philosophy can be difficult and quite demanding. Most likely, you will need to read each selection at least twice and to take notes on what you read.

I strongly discourage makeup exams and late papers. Excluding extraordinary circumstances, you should make such requests before the day of the exam or the due date for the paper.

Any student who has a disability that prevents the fullest expression of abilities should contact me as soon as possible so we can discuss class requirements.

Academic misconduct (plagiarism, cheating, etc.) will result in no credit for the assignment in question. Depending on the circumstances, I may also refer cases of academic misconduct to the University Judicial Board. Academic misconduct is a serious matter, and it will be treated as such. Keep in mind that plagiarism, in general, is using someone else's words or ideas as your own (even if you paraphrase those words or ideas you must credit the original author). For further definition see the *UAH Student Handbook*.

UAH is committed to the fundamental values of preserving academic honesty as defined in the Student Handbook (7.III.A). The instructor reserves the right to utilize electronic means to help prevent plagiarism. Students agree that by taking this course all assignments are subject to submission for textual similarity review to Turnitin.com. Assignments submitted to Turnitin.com will be included as source documents in Turnitin.com's restricted access database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism in such documents. The terms that apply to the University's use of the Turnitin.com service, as well as additional information about the company, are described at www.uah.edu/library/turnitin.

Extra Credit Option:

Coming to class is important to doing well in this course. So, to encourage class attendance, I will offer every student who misses three or fewer classes 2 points on their *final course average*, or four or fewer classes, 1 point on their *final course average*. (I will have a sign in sheet, and will check signatures. If I find that someone has signed in for you on a day you are absent, both you and the person who signed in for you will lose the opportunity for the 2 points and may be subject to university judicial action).