

**INSTRUCTOR:**

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**GOALS:** By the end of the quarter students will be able to: (1) distinguish normative and non-normative approaches to ethics; (2) identify teleological and deontological ethical theories; (3) demonstrate advanced knowledge of Kantian ethics, utilitarianism, and perfectionism; (4) demonstrate basic knowledge of ethical egoism, Plato's ethics, and divine will theory; (5) demonstrate basic knowledge of metaethical theories, including relativism, subjectivism, objectivism, absolutism, nihilism, and skepticism; (6) use philosophical methods of analysis and argument; (7) demonstrate awareness of social, cultural and historical assumptions in ethical reasoning; (8) appeal to ethical theories and principles to justify alternative viewpoints; (9) serve as peer reviewers for colleagues (graduate students); (10) prepare a research paper (graduate students).

**MEETINGS:** In-class meetings are Tuesday & Thursday, 12:30-2:20, in HSB BB 1602. This class combines in-person & online learning. Refer to the daily schedule (below) for more information.

**DESCRIPTION:** This course introduces you to some of the most influential ethical theories to date and, with a critical eye, studies the source and ground of their influence. Among the theories we will discuss are classical and contemporary utilitarianism, perfectionism, and Kantian ethics. In the course of studying these theories, we raise and critically discuss questions such as the following. Are ethical standards just a matter of cultural or individual opinion? Is it always morally preferable to perform whatever action produces the best consequences? What reason can anybody have for being moral, rather than just giving the appearance of being moral when that serves one's purposes? Readings will be from historically prominent Western philosophers, such as Bentham, Mill, Nietzsche, and Kant, as well as from contemporary scholars. Cross-cultural perspectives are incorporated throughout, with a focus on Asian and feminist perspectives.

**REQUIREMENTS:**

**Undergraduate Students:** Undergraduates are required to take 2 in-class examinations, participate in 3 in-class group assignments, and complete 10 philosophical reflections.

- In-Class Group Projects (33/34 points each, 100 total points, 25% of course grade)
- Online Philosophical Reflections (10 points each, 100 total points, 25% of course grade)
- Examinations (100 points each, 200 total points, 50% of course grade)

**Graduate Students:** Graduate students are required to complete the same assignments as undergraduate and in addition to complete a research paper. Grades for graduate students are based on:

- In-Class Group Project: (33 or 34 points each, 100 total points, 20% of course grade)
- Online Philosophical Reflections: (10 points each, 100 total points, 20% of course grade)
- Examinations: (100 points each, 200 total points, 40% of course grade)
- *Graduate Student Paper (100 points total, 20% of course grade)*

**ASSIGNMENTS:**

**Philosophical Reflections** engage students in writing and reflecting on readings to formulate & defend a philosophical position in response to a question posed by the instructor. Student postings are available for viewing by the instructor, but cannot be viewed by classmates. Students earn full credit for on-time postings that show reasonable quality & effort; no credit is earned for unsatisfactory or late work. Each reflection should be written in journal format and be approximately 1-2 pages (250-500 words).

**Group Projects** facilitate working with classmates in small groups to debate a contemporary ethical problem using a case study. Students discuss issues, develop arguments, prepare slides, & present material to classmates.

**Exams** test student mastery of material covered in online and in-class lectures and discussion. The format combines essays and multiple-choice questions. Exam review sheets will be available online to facilitate exam preparation and the class prior to the exam will be devoted to exam preparation. Exams are online & require an access code, which will be provided in class on exam dates. Use of notes, books, & non-exam websites is strictly prohibited.

**Graduate Student Papers** consist of an 8-10-page research paper dealing in more depth with one of the topics discussed in class. Prior to submitting the paper, graduate students must submit a proposal to the instructor for approval and a draft paper to colleagues for structured online and in-class peer review.

**Extra Credit** in the form of unannounced, one-minute papers may be assigned during class. One extra credit point will be available per paper. Extra credit points earned will be posted to Canvas Grade Book and added to your final class grade. For example, if your final score is a 78 out of 100 and you earn 2 extra credit points, your final grade will be raised to an 80.

**POLICIES:**

*UW, Student Academic Responsibility Policy*

*BH Department, Academic Conduct Policy (includes disability accommodation)*

*BH Department, Grading Policy*

*Instructor, Late Assignment Policy*

*Instructor, Vericite Policy*

*Instructor, Missed Class Policy*

**READINGS:** All required readings are available free of charge online at the Canvas Page, E-Readings.

**EQUIPMENT:** On exam days, a laptop is mandatory. If you do not own a laptop, borrow one free of charge from the UW Student Technology Fee (STF) Loan Program. Additional information at: <http://www.cte.uw.edu/STFEquipment>

**DAILY SCHEDULE:****I Metaethics****A. Introduction**

September 28 Introduction

**B. Ethical Relativism**

October 3 Benedict, "A Defense of Ethical Relativism"  
Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" (pp. 1-5, Sections 2.1-2.3)  
PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION 1 DUE

October 5 No In-Class Meeting  
Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" (pp. 5-12, Sections 2.4-2.7)

Williams, "Vulgar Relativism"  
 Midgley, "Trying Out One's Sword"

## **II. Normative Ethics**

### **A. Teleological Theories**

#### **1. Utilitarianism**

- October 10 Bentham, "The Principle of Utility"  
*Recommended:* Streaming Media: Driver, "Consequentialism"  
 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION 2 DUE
- October 12 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapters I-IV (pp. 1-61)
- October 17 No In-Class Meeting  
 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapter V (pp. 62-96)  
*Recommended:* Darwall, "Utilitarianism"  
 PAPER PROPOSALS DUE (Graduate Students Only)  
 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION 3 DUE
- October 19 No In-Class Meeting  
 Online lecture 1: Contemporary Critiques of Utilitarianism  
 Nielsen, "Against Moral Conservatism"  
 Mackie, "The Ethics of Fantasy"  
*Recommended:* Streaming Media: Gardner, "The Nonidentity Problem"
- October 24 Dafoh, "New Perspectives on China's Transplant Numbers"  
 Tatlow, "Signing Up Organ Donors in China"  
 Barry, "Cultural Taboos Surrounding Organ Donation"  
*Recommended:* Williams, "Utilitarianism and Moral Self-Indulgence"  
 GROUP ASSIGNMENT #1: The Organ Donor (in-class)  
 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION 4 DUE
- 2. Perfectionism**
- October 26 Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 382-399  
 Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, pp. 399-405  
 ROUGH DRAFTS DUE FOR PEER REVIEW (Graduate Students Only)  
 ONLINE PEER REVIEW DUE NOVEMBER 2 (Graduate Students Only)
- October 31 No In-Class Meeting  
 IN-PERSON PEER REVIEW (Graduate Students Only)  
 Online Lecture 2: Nietzsche's Ethics  
 Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, pp. 406-408  
 Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, pp. 409  
 Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*  
 Nietzsche, *Homer's Contest*  
 Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*  
 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION 5 DUE
- November 2 Nagel, *Equality and Partiality*, chapters 12-13 (pp. 87-102)  
*Recommended:* Parfit, "Overpopulation and the Quality of Life"  
 EXAMINATION 1 REVIEW SHEET AVAILABLE ONLINE
- November 7 Exam 1 Review Session  
 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION 6 DUE

November 9 IN-CLASS EXAMINATION 1

**A. Deontological Theories**

**1. Kantian Ethics**

November 14 Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Preface  
 O'Kelly, "The Impact of Culture & Religion on Truth Telling at the End of Life"  
 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION 7 DUE  
 GROUP ASSIGNMENT #2: Asian & Muslim Approaches to Truth Telling (in-class)

November 16 Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ch 1-selection ch 2 (pp. 5-26)

November 21 Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, selection ch 2 (pp. 26-40)  
 Feldman, "On Treating People as Ends-In-Themselves"  
 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION 8 DUE

November 23 Thanksgiving (UW Closed)

November 28 Holmes, "Kantianism"  
 Taylor, "Compassion"  
 Held, "Feminist Ethical Theory"  
*Recommended:* Wong, "Ren and Li as Relational Values"  
 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION 9 DUE

November 30 Shue, "Torture"  
 Amnesty International, *No End in Sight: Torture & Forced Confessions in China*  
 GROUP ASSIGNMENT #3: Waterboarding (in-class)  
 EXAMINATION 2 REVIEW SHEET AVAILABLE ONLINE

**2. Ross's Ethics**

December 5 No In-Class Meeting  
 Online Lecture 3: Ross's Ethics  
 Ross, "What Makes Acts Right?"  
 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION 10 DUE  
 EXAM 2 REVIEW SESSION (Online)

December 7 IN-CLASS EXAMINATION 2 (Exam Proctor: Ms. Margaret Mitchell)

December 12 GRADUATE STUDENT PAPERS DUE