

INSTRUCTOR:

Nancy S. Jecker, Ph.D., Professor
UW School of Medicine
Department of Bioethics & Humanities
Office: Health Sciences Bldg. A204J
Office Hours: By appointment
Email: nsjecker@uw.edu
Website: [UW Faculty Website](#)

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 metaethical theories, including relativism, subjectivism, objectivism, absolutism, nihilism, and skepticism; (5) use philosophical methods of analysis and argument; (6) demonstrate awareness of social, cultural and historical assumptions in ethical reasoning; (7) appeal to ethical theories and principles to justify alternative viewpoints; (8) serve as peer reviewers for colleagues (graduate students); (9) prepare a research paper (graduate students).

MEETINGS: In-class meetings are Tuesday & Thursday, 2:30-4:20, in HSB E216. 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. In the course of studying these theories, we raise and critically discuss questions such as the following. 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 East 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 are an online writing assignment that will engage you in reflecting on readings and formulating your own 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. You 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 are an in-class group assignment that facilitates working with classmates in small groups to debate a contemporary ethical problem using a case study. Together with your group, you will discuss issues, develop arguments, prepare slides, & present material to classmates.

Exams tests mastery of online and in-class lectures. Exam review sheets will be available online to facilitate preparation and the class prior to the exam will be devoted to preparation. Exams are online & require an access code, given to you in-class on the exam date. 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. 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 27 Introduction

B. Ethical Relativism

October 2 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 4 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 9 Bentham, "The Principle of Utility"
Recommended: Streaming Media: "Wireless Philosophy: Consequentialism"
 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION 2 DUE
- October 11 Mill, *Utilitarianism*, chapters I-IV (pp. 1-61)
- October 16 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 18 No In-Class Meeting
 Online lecture 1: Utilitarianism: Contemporary Critiques
 Nielsen, "Against Moral Conservatism"
 Mackie, "The Ethics of Fantasy"
- October 23 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 25 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 30 No In-Class Meeting for Undergraduates
 IN-CLASS PEER REVIEW (Graduate Students Only)
 Online Lecture 2: Nietzsche's *Übermensch*
 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 1 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 6 Exam 1 Review Session
 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION 6 DUE
- November 8 IN-CLASS EXAMINATION 1
- A. Deontological Theories**
- 1. Kantian Ethics**
- November 13 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 15 Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, ch 1-selection ch 2 (pp. 5-26)
Recommended: Behrens, "A Critique of the Principle of Autonomy Grounded in African Thought"
- November 20 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 22 Thanksgiving (UW Closed)
- November 27 Holmes, "Kantianism"
 Taylor, "Compassion"
 Held, "Feminist Ethical Theory"
Recommended: Wong, "Ren and Li as Relational Values"
 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION 9 DUE
- November 29 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 4 No In-Class Meeting
 Online Lecture 3: Ross's Theory of *Prima Facie* Duties
 Ross, "What Makes Acts Right?"
 PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION 10 DUE
 EXAM 2 REVIEW SESSION (Online)
- December 6 IN-CLASS EXAMINATION 2 (Exam Proctor: Ms. Margaret Mitchell)
- December 7 GRADUATE STUDENT PAPERS DUE