

Sample Syllabus: Ethics

Instructor

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I am also available by appointment. Please give me at least 24 hours' notice.

Course Description

This is a course in ethics, the study of value and obligation. We will begin with some issues in applied ethics, the branch of ethics concerned with the moral status of particular sorts of actions. We will discuss the ethics of abortion, eating meat, and donating to charity. Next, we will move on to normative ethics, the branch of ethics that examines general theories of and systematic approaches to morality. We will cover forms of consequentialism, deontology, virtue ethics, and feminist ethics. Finally, we will close with a look into metaethics, the branch of ethics that investigates the foundations of moral thought and discourse. We will survey some popular views in metaethics, including moral relativism, moral nihilism, and moral realism.

Required Text

Our main textbook, *Ethics: The Fundamentals* by Julia Driver, is required and can be purchased online. The other readings are articles and excerpts that will be posted online, including:

- “A Defense of Abortion” by Judith Jarvis Thomson
- “Puppies, Pigs, and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases” by Alastair Norcross
- “Famine, Affluence, and Morality” by Peter Singer
- “Moral Relativism” by Gilbert Harmon, in *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity*
- “The Subjectivity of Values” by J. L. Mackie, in *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*
- “Moral Realism” by Geoff Sayre-McCord, from *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*

Course Requirements

Here is the grading breakdown with tentative due dates:

- Lecture participation – 5% – Register and use your iClicker
- Section participation – 5% – See your TA for details
- Weekly homework – 20% (2% each) – Due Tuesdays
- Paper 1 (800-1200 words) – 20% – Due Tuesday (2/4) of Week 5
- Paper 2 (800-1200 words) – 25% – Due Tuesday (2/25) of Week 8
- Paper 3 (800-1200 words) – 25% – Due Tuesday (3/17) of Finals Week

Paper Assignments

Each paper will consist of a defense or critique of an argument/theory we covered in class. You will (a) explain and motivate the argument/theory, (b) advance an objection, and (c) address some possible responses. Your thesis should concern whether the argument/theory is ultimately successful or unsuccessful in light of the objection. Late papers lose 1/3 letter grade per day.

Weekly Homework

Each week, you will write up a short analysis of an argument/theory covered that week. This will consist of a brief summary of the argument/theory as well one objection to it. This should be no more than half a page, and it will receive either full credit (for completion), half credit, or zero credit.

Schedule

We will try, as far as possible, to keep to the following tentative schedule:

<u>Week</u>	<u>Readings</u>	<u>Topics</u>	<u>Paper Assignments</u>
<i>Unit 1: Applied Ethics</i>			
1	Thomson	Abortion	
2	Norcross	Eating Meat	
3	Singer	Donating to Charity	Paper 1 Assigned
<i>Unit 2: Normative Ethics</i>			
4	Driver: Intro, Ch. 2	Intro to Moral Theory	
5	Driver: Ch. 3-4	Consequentialism	Paper 1 Due (2/4)
6	Driver: Ch. 5-7	Deontology	Paper 2 Assigned
7	Driver: Ch. 8-9	Virtue Ethics & Feminist Ethics	
<i>Unit 3: Metaethics</i>			
8	Driver: Ch. 1; Harmon	Moral Relativism	Paper 2 Due (2/25)
9	Driver: Ch. 10; Mackie	Moral Nihilism	Paper 3 Assigned
10	Sayre-McCord	Moral Realism	
			Paper 3 Due (3/17)

Disability Policy

If you need accommodations, please speak to me in advance and make arrangements with Disabled Students Services (DSP) at <http://dsp.sa.ucsb.edu>.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty, such as plagiarizing, will be severely punished. For more info on what constitutes academic dishonesty, see judicialaffairs.sa.ucsb.edu/AcademicIntegrity.aspx.

Final Note

Please feel free to bring any concerns about the course to my attention. This syllabus is liable to change, and you are responsible for any changes given adequate notice. If you miss a class, it is your responsibility to find out what you missed.