PHIL 2200: Ethics  
Stoner/Fall 2013

Mondays, 10:00 – 12:50, Eden Prairie G219

Instructor

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Office hours: after class and by appointment.

Course Description

Ethical questions can be general, specific, or anywhere in between. What ought I do with my life? (General.) Should I report my co-worker for stealing supplies from work? (Specific.) Is the death penalty morally defensible? (In between.) Whether general or specific, we frequently disagree about the answers to ethical questions. This class focuses on understanding and evaluating the arguments that arise in the context of ethical disagreement. We will begin by examining three famous approaches to ethical thinking: consequences-based ethics, rights-based ethics, and character-based ethics. Using the considerations that are central to each of these approaches, as well as tools for making and critiquing arguments, we will discuss the ethics of eating animals, the ethics of abortion, and more.

Course Goals

1. Understand consequences-based ethics
2. Understand rights-based ethics
3. Understand character-based ethics
4. Evaluate a variety of skeptical challenges to ethical thinking
5. Conduct productive small-group discussions
6. Create and defend original arguments
7. Respectfully critique the arguments of others
8. Practice writing clearly and concisely

Required Texts


Additional required readings are posted on D2L. To login, visit: https://hennepintech.ims.mnscu.edu. Your username is your Tech ID number, and your password is (usually) your birth date in YY/MM/DD form. Find assigned readings in the “Content” section of the D2L site.

Course requirements
Participation: 150 points
Weekly short writing: 150 points
Weekly quizzes on D2L: 100 points
Midterm paper: 200 points
Final paper: 300 points
Final exam: 100 points

**Final exam.** The final is an in-class written exam. I will post review questions two weeks before the test, and all questions will be drawn from the review sheet.

**Participation.** Discussions are the centerpiece of the course. For these discussions to succeed, your attendance alone is insufficient. You must come prepared to contribute productively to small-group and large-group discussions. (And lectures, too.)

**Weekly short writing.** Each week you will write a one-page paper. I will post the prompt for the week's paper on D2L by Wednesday evening, and the papers are due at the beginning of class the following Monday. Your total score for the weekly writing assignments will be the sum of your ten best scores out of twelve available assignments.

**Weekly quizzes.** Each week I will post a quiz covering the assigned portion of the Weston textbook. It will be available to take until 11:59 PM the night before we meet.

**Longer papers.** In addition to the weekly writing you will write two longer papers that will require you to explain a moral question of your own choosing, and to develop your own answer to that question in some detail.

Grade Table

At the end of the semester, I will total up all your points and assign letter grades based on this table. These thresholds indicate firm cut-off points. For example, a total score of 864 points will be marked B, while a total score of 865 will be marked B+.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letter Grade</th>
<th>Point threshold</th>
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<td>A</td>
<td>935</td>
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<td>A-</td>
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<td>B+</td>
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Course Schedule

8/26: Introductions and Course Overview
9/2: Labor Day (No Class)

9/9: Ethics Avoidance Disorders: Appeals to Culture and Science

Before coming to class, please:

Read Chapter 2, “Ethics Avoidance Disorders”
Read Midgley, “On Trying Out One’s New Sword” (D2L)
Read Tellez, “Just Lather, That's All” (D2L)

9/16: Ethics Avoidance Disorders: Appeals to Religion and Law

Before coming to class, please:

Read Chapter 3, “Ethics and Religion”
Read Chapter 11, “Dialogue”
Read Genesis 38, the story of Judah and Tamar (D2L)

9:23: Making Progress in Ethics

Before coming to class, please:

Read Chapter 4, “Taking Values Seriously”
Read Bennett, “The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn” (D2L)
Read Bisson, “They’re Made Out of Meat?” (D2L)

9/30: The Ethics of Happiness I

Before coming to class, please:

Read Chapter 6, “The Ethics of Happiness”
Read excerpt from Hornby, High Fidelity (D2L)

10/7: The Ethics of Happiness II

Before coming to class, please:

Read Chapter 10, “Judging Like Cases Alike”
Read Singer, “The Singer Solution to World Poverty” (D2L)

10/14: The Ethics of Happiness Applied: Eating Animals

Before coming to class, please:

Read Norcross, “Puppies, Pigs and People” (D2L)
Read Pollan, “Power Steer” (D2L)
10/21: The Ethics of the Person I

Before coming to class, please:

Read Chapter 5, “The Ethics of the Person”

10/28: The Ethics of the Person II

Before coming to class, please:

Read Chapter 9, “Critical Thinking”
Read excerpt from Clark, “Whose Life Is It Anyway?” (D2L)
Work on your midterm paper

11/4: The Ethics of the Person Applied: Abortion

Turn in your midterm paper at the beginning of class.

Before coming to class, please:

Read Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” (D2L)
Read Sullivan's curated collection “It's So Personal” (D2L)

11/11: The Ethics of Virtue I

Before coming to class, please:

Read Chapter 7, “The Ethics of Virtue”

11/18: The Ethics of Virtue II

Before coming to class, please:

Read Chapter 13, “Creative Problem Solving”
Read Gilman, “The Unnatural Mother” (D2L)

11/25: Faculty Development Day (No Class)

12/2: Recap and Review

Before coming to class, please:

Read Chapter 12, “When Values Clash”

12/9: Paper Workshops

Before coming to class, please:
Study the final exam review sheet, and formulate any questions you’d like to ask. Print out and bring along a copy of your final paper draft.

12/16: Final Exam

Turn in your final paper at the beginning of class.

Course Policies

**Late papers.** Weekly short writing, due at the beginning of class on Mondays, will not be accepted late for any reason. The two longer papers I will accept late at a penalty of ten points per day late.

**Small group discussions.** Small-group discussions are the core of this course. Disagreement is an inevitable and desirable consequence of any serious philosophical discussion. Disagreement can be fruitful, it can be fun, and it can also be frustrating. I expect you to be—always and without fail—respectful, thoughtful, and kind in discussion, even in the face of frustrating disagreements. This is not hard to do. If at any point you feel the temptation to sneer, or get angry or hurt, or raise your voice, take a moment to calm down. Then offer, as clearly and generously as you can, the reasons you disagree with the trend of the discussion.

**Extra credit.** There will be no extra credit.

**Incompletes.** I will not, under most circumstances, file an Incomplete. I will only file an incomplete if 1) you meet with me to discuss it before the end of the semester and 2) you come prepared with a very good, clear, and compelling argument for why I should make an exception in your case.

**Electronic Devices.** Do not use any electronics in the classroom, please. No phones, no laptops, no tablets, no nothing. If you have a legitimate reason for bringing a device to class (if you have a sick kid at home who might need to call you, for example) please let me know before class starts.

**Internet access.** I will post readings, quizzes, and other course materials to D2L. To use D2L you will need computer and internet access. If you do not have your own connected computer, you can use one of the computers in the library or computer lab to complete your work.

**Academic integrity.** I encourage you to discuss the readings and your own writing with your peers any time you get the opportunity; however, the written work you turn in must be entirely your own. If I catch you plagiarizing work on any assignment, you will receive a 0 on that assignment (or, in the case of weekly writing, a 0 for your entire weekly writing grade), and I will file a report with the college.

**Academic support.** The Writing Center and Learning Resource Center offer free tutoring and help writing papers on a walk-in basis or by appointment. They are
available to help students understand assignments, troubleshoot and work through problem areas, prioritize assignment tasks and goals while building on existing skills. Please stop in for help with your assignments. Their hours are posted on the HTC website under tutoring.

**Students with disabilities.** Our college is committed to providing optimal educational services for all students, including those with disabilities. The Disability Services Office provides direct assistance such as information, referral, advocacy, support, and academic accommodations for students. In general, accommodations are made on an individualized and flexible basis. It is the responsibility of students to seek assistance at HTC and to make their needs known. All students who wish to receive assistance through Disability Services must meet with the Director and complete an intake process. Documentation should be presented at this time. Available services will be explained and those deemed appropriate will be provided upon the student’s request. The Director of Disability Services can be reached at BPC 763-488-2477 or EPC 952-995-1544. Please contact the Director of Disability Services immediately if you wish to request reasonable accommodations for this course.