Introduction to Ethics

*Course Syllabus Draft A*

Courtesy of [EthicsinaNutshell.org](http://ethicsinanutshell.org/index.html)

Required Readings

* [***Ethics in a Nutshell: The Philosopher’s Approach to Morality in 100 Pages***](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0989254240) by Matt Deaton
* [***Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?***](https://www.amazon.com/Justice-Whats-Right-Thing-Do/dp/0374532508/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1470996191&sr=8-1&keywords=justice+sandel) by Michael Sandel
* [***Abortion Ethics in a Nutshell: A Pro-Both Tour of the Moral Arguments***](https://www.amazon.com/dp/1951677064)by Matt Deaton
* Various philosophy articles and book selections (see Reading and Assignments Schedule below), which will be posted on the course site

Readings and Assignments Schedule

*In most cases Organized by Thursdays, when new lecture videos and reflection prompts will usually be posted, through* ***Wednesdays, when reflection posts will be due by midnight*** *unless otherwise noted (look for underlined and bolded dates for deviations from that norm).*

***M*** Aug 23 – W Aug 25: “How to Study Philosophy” and “The Fundamentals of Critical Thinking”

R Aug 26 – W Sep 1: *Abortion Ethics in a Nutshell* **Chapter 4** “Rate That Abortion,” *Ethics in a Nutshell* **Chapter 1**: Introduction and *Ethics in a Nutshell* **Chapter 2**: Ethics, Religion & Public Discourse

R Sep 2 – W Sep 8: *Ethics in a Nutshell* **Chapter 3**: Why Ethics Isn’t Ice Cream and **Chapter 4**: Three Key Distinctions

R Sep 9 – W Sep 15: *Ethics in a Nutshell* **Chapter 5**: The Four Dominant Ethical Theories

R Sep 16 – W Sep 22: *Ethics in a Nutshell* **Chapter 6**: All-Things-Considered, **Chapter 7**: Argument by Analogy, **Chapter 8**: Moral Intuitions and Coherence, and **Chapter 9**: Conclusion

***Sat Sep 25: EXAM ONE DUE BY MIDNIGHT***

R Sep 23 – W Sep 29: Sandel’s *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?* **Chapter 1**: Doing the Right Thing and **Chapter 2**: The Greatest Happiness Principle – Utilitarianism

R Sep 30 – W Oct 6: Sandel’s *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?* **Chapter 3**: Do We Own Ourselves? – Libertarianism and Justice **Chapter 5:** What Matters is the Motive – Immanuel Kant

R Oct 7 – W Oct 13: Sandel’s *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?* **Chapter 6**: The Case for Equality – John Rawls

R Oct 14 – W Oct 20: Sandel’s *Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?* **Chapter 10**: Justice and the Common Good

***Sat Oct 23: EXAM TWO DUE BY MIDNIGHT***

R Oct 21 – W Oct 27: *Abortion Ethics in a Nutshell* **Introduction**: A Better Way, **Chapter 1**: What to Call It…, **Chapter 2**: Is It Alive? and **Chapter 3**: Does It Have a Soul?

R Oct 28 – W Nov 3: *Abortion Ethics in a Nutshell* **Chapter 4**: Rate That Abortion, **Chapter 5**: The Nature of the Conception and **Chapter 6**: The Mother’s Interests

R Nov 4 – W Nov 10: *Abortion Ethics in a Nutshell* **Chapter 7**: The UDH’s Value and **Chapter 8**: The Child’s Quality of Life

R Nov 11 – W Nov 17: *Abortion Ethics in a Nutshell* **Chapter 9**: The Father’s Autonomy and **Chapter 10**: Third Parties

***M*** Nov 22 – ***F*** Nov 26: NO CLASS – ENJOY THANKSGIVING

***M*** Nov 29 – W Dec 1: *Abortion Ethics in a Nutshell* **Chapter 11**: Abortion Solved?, **Chapter 12**: A Right to the UDH’s Death? and **Chapter 13**: Pro-*Both*

***Sat Dec 4: EXAM THREE DUE BY MIDNIGHT***

***Wed Dec 8: COURSE PROJECT DUE BY MIDNIGHT (early submissions welcome)***

Course Goals

The course will:

1. Extend the students’ understanding of moral philosophy and of the main moral theories in Western thought.
2. Expand the students’ awareness of the major moral issues of our time.
3. Enhance the students’ ability to think about moral issues in a critical and open-minded way.
4. Foster the students’ ability to apply the theories studied to the issues considered.
5. Develop the students’ ability to articulate views about these and other moral/philosophical issues.

Learning Outcomes

Students will be able to:

1. Explain and apply the four dominant ethical theories of Kantianism, Utilitarianism, Care Ethics and Virtue Ethics to contemporary moral problems.
2. Assess philosophical arguments with the tools of logic.
3. Explain problems with moral subjectivism/relativism.
4. Explain why morality and legality are connected but distinct concepts.
5. Evaluate, revise and create moral arguments, including moral arguments by analogy.
6. Explain the primary morally relevant considerations surrounding abortion, including the emerging debate over parents’ rights once abortions can be replaced by transplants into artificial wombs.
7. Articulate and analyze arguments concerning contemporary issues including the death penalty, compulsory vaccinations, mask mandates, parental and children’s autonomy and artificial intelligence.
8. Write papers that apply critical thinking skills (logic) to contemporary ethical issues.

Grading Scale Percentages

A = 90-100% B = 80-89.99% C = 70-79.99% D = 60-69.99% F = 59.99% or below

Grade Distribution

Weekly Video/Written Reflection Posts: 30% Final grade

Exam One: 20% Final Grade

Exam Two: 20% Final Grade

Exam Three: 20% Final Grade

Course Project: 10% Final Grade

Assignments Details

**Weekly Reflection (Discussion Board) Assignments**

* Each week I’ll ask you to respond to a prompt on the course website Discussion Board. You can answer the assigned prompt(s) in one of two ways: 1) via a link to a YouTube (or Vimeo or whatever) video of **3-5 minutes**, or 2) via a written post of 3**00-500 words**. Meeting and staying within the minute/word requirements allows me to both better plan my grading and better compare the quality of and fairly grade submissions – thank you for planning and editing your videos and/or posts such that they’re between 3 and 5 minutes or 300-500 words. ***These weekly posts will be due each week by midnight Wednesday unless otherwise noted in the schedule or on the course website in writing and will not be accepted after they are due. Please plan accordingly.***
* So long as your post indicates you read, reflected on and seriously engaged the assigned reading(s), you fully answer all aspects of the prompt(s), and it falls within the minute or word count requirements above, you will receive full credit – 10/10. I’m not asking for perfection, just engagement, thought and honest reflection – meaning it’s obvious from your post that you read the assigned material and thought a bit about the assigned question(s) before replying, and actually answered all aspects, Demonstrate that, and you’ll get 10/10. (The exams and course project are another story!)
* **Be sure to follow the directions.** Sometimes rather than only responding to a prompt, I’ll ask you to complete specified exercises, such as diagram an argument or identify reasoning fallacies. Be sure to always read the directions to ensure you understand what’s expected, and how your post will be graded.
* **When aspects of the prompts are numbered, number your responses as well, and do not include the prompt text in your post.** In other words, if the prompts says, “Paragraph 1: Concisely summarize Hardwig’s argument in your own words. Paragraph 2: Explain Hardwig’s distinction between ‘owning’ and ‘possessing’ a thing, you would reply: “1: Hardwig argues that….. [new paragraph] 2: While simply possessing a thing means blah blah blah…” Failing to adhere to this convention will result in a deduction of points—more points as we progress into the semester.

\* While late reflections will not be accepted, I’ll drop your lowest reflection grade, so you can strategically skip a week if you like ☺ Just be ready for the exams.

**Exams**

You’ll take three exams per the schedule in this syllabus. Each will build on the previous, such that all will be cumulative, but expect the majority of the questions on any given exam to concern the most recent readings. Unless I announce otherwise, the exams will be made up of multiple choice and true/false questions. Though I’m not a tough grader on the weekly reflection posts, expect the exams to be reasonably difficult.

The exams are open book and open note, but you’re expected to complete them on your own, without the assistance of classmates or other persons. And they’ll be timed for 1 hour. So prep thoroughly and bring your A game.

While exams will remain technically open for several days after they are due, each day late will incur worsening point deductions, and after a certain number of days a zero will be recorded – please carefully review the schedule above and plan accordingly.

**Course Project**

On the course website you’ll find detailed instructions on the course project which will require writing a 6-page paper. Go ahead and schedule time during the final month of the semester to research, write, revise, finalize and submit your course project. Attempting to figure it out last-minute would be unnecessarily stressful, and would be unlikely to produce the quality product you’re capable of producing.

As always, be sure to place all verbatim quotes within “quote marks” and to cite your sources.

Please email or call with questions. And you are encouraged to take advantage of the various resources the school offers to help with writing both in-person and online.

***Additional Plagiarism Warning***

“Plagiarism” is passing off someone else’s work as your own. This includes the work of your classmates, as well as ideas you might find in books or on the Internet. Consulting outside sources is admirable. Copying and pasting language from outside sources without noting them as a source and/or failing to place direct quotes within “quote marks” is not admirable, and will earn you a zero for the assignment, and/or an F for the course, and/or additional non-fun stuff (see Academic Dishonesty section above for additional scary language).

Philosophy isn’t the easiest thing to do when you’re new. But it’s not super hard, either, and definitely within your reach. If you’re having difficulty coming up with what you consider a quality submission for any assignment, email or call – promise I can help. Don’t resort to plagiarism. It’s not worth the risk, and you’ll grow so much more as a person if you tackle these assignments yourself, even if you have to do it with my help (might grow more with my help…).