

Introduction to Ethics

Instructor Information

Instructor

Andrew del Rio

Email

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Office Hours

WAG 319 | T 2-3:30

General Course Information

Course Place and Time

WEL 3.502

T/R 12:30-2:00pm

Course Description

This course will explore the deep questions about how we ought to live and what kind of person we ought to be. We will study different answers to the questions: What is the good life—the life worth living? What makes an action the morally right thing to do? Is there even such a thing as the morally right thing to do? And if there is, isn't it all relative? What's God or religion have to do with the good life and the right thing to do? Can we even know right from wrong? Scattered throughout our study of ethical theories we will study debates about specific ethical dilemmas of contemporary interest. Alongside our study of these theories and debates we will take time to individually reflect on how we would like to develop our own characters.

Course Objectives

- Find, clarify, and evaluate arguments
- Understand the major positions in ethical theory
- Reflect on and cultivate a virtuous character
- Interpret philosophical texts
- Write analytical and argumentative papers on philosophical themes
- Devise philosophical arguments in the context of group discussion and debate
- Experience the joys of philosophical wonder

Course Materials

Required Texts

- Shafer-Landau, R. *The Fundamentals of Ethics*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. (abbreviated FE in Course Schedule below)
- Shafer-Landau, R. *The Ethical Life*. 4th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017. (abbr. EL)
- All other required readings will be available on Canvas.

Canvas

Canvas is your friend so check Canvas regularly! Readings will be available through Canvas. All assignments will be submitted on Canvas. All updates to the course schedule and assignments will be announced on Canvas. All lectures will be posted to Canvas. There will also be a Canvas discussion accompanying each of our course topics. Attendance, reading/lecture quizzes, and class surveys will also be administered through Canvas. Therefore you will need a smartphone, tablet, or computer connected to the internet in each class.

Course Evaluation

Attendance: 5%	Paper #1: 15%
Participation: 5%	Paper #2: 20%
Logic Assignment: 5%	Paper #3: 25%
Virtue Project Part I and II: 10%	Final Exam: 15%

Grading Scheme

Percentage grades determine letter grades as follows:

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Letter</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
A	100-93	C	77-73
A-	93-90	C-	73-70
B+	90-87	D+	70-67
B	87-83	D	67-63
B-	83-80	D-	63-60
C+	80-77	F	60-0

Attendance: 5%

You will get the most out of this class through consistent attendance! In order to motivate you to attend, you will only be allowed 3 absences without penalty. Each additional absence will incur a penalty of 2% off the final grade, up to 5% points. Attendance will be taken through Canvas.

Participation: 5%

You will get the most out of this class through consistent participation! The more participation there is, the more the whole class benefits. Your participation will be evaluated through in-class reading quizzes and in-class lecture quizzes taken through Canvas. These quizzes will not be very

hard but will require attentive reading of the assignments and attentive participation in class. Your 6 lowest quiz grades will be dropped.

Virtue Project Part I: 5%

Read Franklin's "Thirteen Virtues." Reflect on your own character and some virtue that you would like to develop more in your own life. The virtue can be one that Franklin discusses but need not be. Charity, Generosity, Hopefulness, Empathy, Patience, Honor, Kindness, Friendship, Self-Control, Courage, and Gratitude are just a few of many other virtues. Choose a virtue you are comfortable sharing about in a Virtue Journal (see Virtue Project Part II). Write 150-200 words (1) naming the virtue of your choice, (2) describing it in your own words, (3) describing a little about why you chose that virtue, and (4) describing some practice, method, or strategy that you will employ for 12 weeks this semester in order to cultivate that virtue in your life. Be realistic and keep it simple! This assignment will be given full credit, 75% credit, or no credit. Include a Word Count.

Virtue Project Part II: 5%

For 12 weeks keep a Virtue Journal. Once a week briefly record in a document how that week went with respect to your desired virtue development. Did you forget to think about it? Did you notice a lot of moments of vice? Did your practice seem to bear some fruit? Was practicing for your chosen virtue easier than before? Your Virtue Journal should have 12 *dated* entries. The final entry should be a bit longer and comment on the 12 weeks overall rather than just the 12th week.

For example:

Gratitude Journal

3rd Week: Sep. 27th

This week I did better remembering to think about gratitude. I noticed more things to be thankful for this week and found myself thanking people for little things in a more genuine way.

4th Week: Oct. 4th

This week I thought about three people in my life that have really brought me joy, but that I have rarely expressed gratitude towards. I wrote three thank you notes.

Logic Assignment: 5%

Read Coffman's "Finding, Clarifying, and Evaluating Arguments" and complete the worksheet "Logic Boot Camp Assignment" posted in Files on Canvas in the Logic Folder. This assignment will test your understanding of the concepts in Coffman's paper. Like all the other assignments, you must submit this assignment on Canvas, but unlike all the other assignments, scans of hand written work are permitted.

Paper #1: Good Life Survey: 15%

Write 750-1000 words surveying the three views of the good life discussed in class. Include a Word Count. The paper should have four (and only four) labeled sections (no Introduction or Conclusion):

- I. Hedonism
- II. Desire-Satisfaction
- III.A Case of Divergence
- IV. Objectivism

Paper #1 Details:

Start your first section (and the paper) like this:

I. Hedonism

“The Hedonist theory of the good life is the view that...”

Explain the Hedonist theory of the good life and one problem for it. It can be a problem raised by Shafer-Landau or one of the proposed counterexamples from class.

Start your second section like this:

II. Desire-Satisfaction

“The Desire-satisfaction theory of the good life is the view that...”

Explain the Desire-satisfaction theory of the good life and one problem for it. It can be a problem raised by Shafer-Landau or one of the proposed counterexamples from class.

Start your third section like this:

III.A Case of Divergence

“Though similar, the Hedonist theory and the Desire-Satisfaction theory are not the same. These theories are different because...”

Explain why the theories are different and make explicit a case where the two theories diverge about whether some event is part of the good life.

Start your fourth section like this:

IV. Objectivism

“The Objectivist theory of the good life is the view that...”

Explain the difference between objective and subjective views of the good life and list some feature(s) which an objectivist might think is required for a good life.

Paper #2: Classical Utilitarianism Evaluation: 20%

Write 1000-1250 words evaluating classical utilitarianism. Include a Word Count. The paper should have five (and only five) labeled sections:

- V. Introduction
- VI. Classical Utilitarianism
- VII. Objection
- VIII. Response
- IX. Evaluation

Paper #2 Details:

Start your first section (and the paper) like this:

I. Introduction

“My thesis is that...”

Briefly state your thesis (what you will argue—your evaluation or view of utilitarianism) and explain what will happen in the paper, that is, give a road map.

Start your second section like this:

II. Classical Utilitarianism

“Classical Utilitarianism is the view that says...”

Explain Classical Utilitarianism and motivate the view by giving a case where utilitarianism mandates the intuitively right action.

Start your third section like this:

III. Objection

“One objection to utilitarianism is...”

Explain what you take to be *the best* objection to utilitarianism. It can be an objection raised by Shafer-Landau, one of the proposed counterexamples from class, or your own objection. Make it very clear how what you are saying is supposed to be a problem for utilitarianism.

Start your fourth section like this:

IV. Response

“The best utilitarian response to the objection is...”

Explain how the utilitarian should respond. Avoid just saying the utilitarian should disagree. Try to give a reason that the utilitarian might provide to persuade us that the counterexample or objection is not a good one.

Start your final section like this:

V. Evaluation

“I think the utilitarian response to the objection is successful. This is the case because...” or *“I think the utilitarian response to the objection is unsuccessful. The objection stands. This is the case because...”* or *“It is unclear what to say about the utilitarian response...”*

Explain what you think about utilitarianism and the response to the objection. In the end I want to know what you believe about utilitarianism.

Paper #3: Ethical Issue Evaluation: 25%

Write 1250-1500 words evaluating either the affluence issue, the abortion issue, or the animal treatment issue. Pick an issue and explain the arguments of the authors we read on that issue. State which author made the stronger case in your view, and give what you take to be the strongest objection to that author’s argument. Finally, evaluate whether that objection is successful or whether the author’s position stands, making clear your own view on the issue. The paper should follow the style of the previous papers and include labeled sections focused on each part of the paper. Include a brief introduction stating the thesis of the paper and a roadmap. Also include a brief conclusion summarizing the paper’s content. Include a Word Count.

Final Exam: 15%

There will be a cumulative multiple choice and true/false exam. A comprehensive study guide (see p. 71 below) will be provided and you will only be tested on material that is on the study guide.

Course Policies

Technology Policy

Sometimes tech hurts. Research shows that using laptops, tablets, and phones in class is bad for both you and your classmates.

- You don't learn as much
- You don't remember as much
- You take bad notes
- You perform worse on tests
- You distract others & they perform worse on tests¹

Unless you have requested and received permission to do so, the use of phones/laptops/tablets is prohibited except for the use of Canvas—taking Canvas quizzes/surveys, referencing Canvas readings. If your phones/laptops/tablets are out for any other purpose, you will be asked to put them away. If a problem persists, points may be deducted from your Participation grade at my discretion.

Late Work Policy

Assignment grades will be penalized 5% if submitted within the first 24 hours after they are due, 10% if submitted within 24-48 hours after they are due, 15% within 48-72 hours, etc. This penalty is doubled for Paper #3.

Rewrite Policy

If you receive a grade of less than 85% on Paper #1 or #2, you may revise the paper (based on my feedback) and resubmit it for a maximum grade of 85%. The paper will be regraded and is not guaranteed to receive a higher grade. If the paper is worse it will receive a lower grade. Whatever grade is assigned for a rewrite becomes the final grade for that paper assignment. You have two weeks from the time your initial grade is returned to you to submit a rewrite. There are no rewrites for Paper #3 because there is not sufficient time at the end of the semester.

Plagiarism Policy

Plagiarism is the practice of intentionally or unintentionally using someone else's writing without properly acknowledging the source. **Plagiarism will not be tolerated.** Every semester I discover someone plagiarizing. Do not plagiarize! Again, you plagiarize when:

- You do not make clear exactly what you borrow from a source.
- You do not make clear exactly what the source is from which you borrow.²

If you submit plagiarized work on any assignment you will receive a provisional grade of F for the class and will be referred to the Office of the Dean of Students for disciplinary action.

¹ <http://dailynous.com/2018/08/15/discourage-laptops-class-slides-can-show-students/>

² Lewis Vaughn, *Writing Philosophy*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2006), 99.

Further Information

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities may request appropriate academic accommodations from the Division of Diversity and Community Engagement, Services for Students with Disabilities. See <https://diversity.utexas.edu/disability/>.

Advice on Reading and Writing Philosophy

Reading philosophy is difficult. It is a slow process of sustained intellectual effort. Give yourself ample time to complete the readings. You will benefit by first reading Jim Pryor's "Guidelines on Reading Philosophy," found in Files on Canvas in the Guidance and Study Aids folder. Writing philosophy is also difficult. Good argumentative writing is concise, clear, simple, and well-structured. You will benefit by reading Jim Pryor's "Guidelines on Writing a Philosophy Paper," found in the Files folder on Canvas.

Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
Week 1	Syllabus Overview Course Introduction	FE Introduction Franklin "Thirteen Virtues"	
Week 2	Logic, Arguments, and Reasoning	Coffman "Finding, Clarifying, and Evaluating Arguments"	Virtue Project Part I
Week 3	What's the good life? Feeling pleasure!	FE Ch.1: Hedonism: It's Powerful Appeal FE Ch. 2: Is Happiness All That Matters?	Logic Boot Camp Assignment 1st Virtue Journal Entry
Week 4	What's the good life? Getting what you want!	EL Ch. 2: Nozick "The Experience Machine" FE Ch. 3: Getting What You Want FE Ch. 4: Problems for the Desire Theory	2nd Journal Entry
Week 5	What's the good life? Something objective!	EL Ch. 5: Wolf "Happiness and Meaning" Visions of the Good from the <i>Hebrew Bible</i> and <i>New Testament</i>	3rd Virtue Journal Entry
Week 6	What's God have to do with it?	FE Ch. 5: Morality and Religion EL Ch. 6: Plato "Euthyphro"	4th Virtue Journal Entry

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment
Week 7	Ethical Issue #1: Affluence	EL Ch. 20: Singer "The Singer Solution to World Poverty" EL Ch. 21: Narveson "Feeding the Hungry"	Paper #1 5th Virtue Journal Entry
Week 8	What should I do? Whatever has the best consequences!	FE Ch. 9: Consequentialism: Its Nature EL Ch. 8: Mill "Utilitarianism" FE Ch. 10: Consequentialism: Its Difficulties	6th Virtue Journal Entry
Week 9	Ethical Issue #2 & #3: Atomic Bombs and Abortion	Anscombe "Mr. Truman's Degree" EL Ch. 28: Thomson "A Defense of Abortion" Beckwith "Personal Bodily Rights, Abortion, and Unplugging the Violinist"	7th Virtue Journal Entry
Week 10	What should I do? Your duty!	EL Ch. 9: Kant "The Good Will and the Categorical Imperative" Optional: Timmons "Kant's Moral Theory," Sections 8.1-8.7	Paper #2 8th Virtue Journal Entry
Week 11	Ethical Issue #4: Animal Eating	Harman "The Moral Significance of Animal Pain and Animal Death" Cuneo "Conscientious Omnivorism"	9th Virtue Journal Entry
Week 12	What should I do? Develop virtue!	FE Ch. 17: Virtue Ethics EL Ch. 12: Aristotle "Nicomachean Ethics" Confucius "Analects"	10th Virtue Journal Entry
Week 13	Isn't morality a myth? Or isn't it all relative?	FE Ch. 19: Ethical Relativism EL Ch. 15: Mackie "The Subjectivity of Values" FE Ch. 20: Moral Nihilism	11th Virtue Journal Entry
Week 14	Could morality be objective?	FE Ch. 21: "Ten Arguments Against Moral Objectivity" EL Ch. 18: Enoch "Why I Am an Objectivist about Ethics (And Why You Are, Too)"	12th Virtue Journal Entry Virtue Project Part II
Week 15	Could we know objective moral truths? Review Session	Street "Does Anything Really Matter or Did We Just Evolve to Think So?" Evans "Moral Arguments for the Existence of God: 4. Arguments from Moral Knowledge or Awareness"	Paper #3
Finals Week			FINAL EXAM