

# PHIL 0300: Introduction to Ethics

*Instructor:* Evangelian Collings

*Class meeting time:* Thursdays, 6:00 - 8:30pm

*Classroom:* TBD

*Office hours:* TBD

## 1 Course Description

This is an introductory course in ethics, focusing on questions of right and wrong. We will begin with questions about what makes something good and what counts as a good life, before covering several theories of what makes an action right or wrong including consequentialist, sentimentalist, and deontological theories. These theories will be applied to moral problems of serious interest, including global inequality, animal rights, and procreative enhancement. Students will read both historical and contemporary texts, and participate in frequent class discussions.

## 2 Student Outcomes

This course will work to develop the following capabilities:

1. Independently read, extract key ideas from, and develop appreciation and enjoyment of philosophical texts
2. Identify and explain differing philosophical views presented in these texts
3. Critically evaluate the claims and arguments presented in texts and discussions
4. Formulate questions that further philosophical discussion, reveal depth and difficulties in the material, and inspire curiosity

### 3 Assignments and Evaluation

Short Assignments and Discussion 55%

Paper One 15%

Paper Two 30%

#### 3.1 Short Assignments, Discussion, and Attendance

**Grade Calculation:** Short assignments and discussion participation are marked pass/fail. The letter grade for this portion of the course will be determined according to the following table. Students must complete **all** activities in a given column in order to be awarded the corresponding letter grade. For example, if you wish to get a 'B' for this portion of the course, you must submit eight reading assignments and eight writing assignments that cover at least ten different weeks of the semester, and participate in at least ten class discussions including at least one appearance as a central participant in a structured discussion.

	<b>D</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>A</b>
Reading	Complete at least four (4) assignments	Complete at least six (6) assignments	Complete at least eight (8) assignments	Complete at least ten (10) assignments
Writing	Complete at least four (4) assignments	Complete at least six (6) assignments	Complete at least eight (8) assignments	Complete at least ten (10) assignments
Discussion	Participate in at least six (6) discussions	Participate in at least eight (8) discussions	Participate in at least ten (10) discussions and act as a central participant during one (1) or more structured discussions	Participate in at least twelve (12) discussions and act as a central participant during one (1) or more structured discussions
Attendance	Complete assignments in at least six (6) different weeks	Complete assignments in at least eight (8) different weeks	Complete assignments in at least ten (10) different weeks	Complete assignments in at least twelve (12) different weeks

**Reading Assignments:** Every week, students will be given a short assignment that asks them to identify particular features of the text. These assignments are designed to provide the practice needed to achieve outcomes [1] and [2].

**Writing Assignments:** Every week, students will be given a short writing assignment designed to either develop outcome [4] or to prepare students for the longer paper assignments.

**Discussion:** We will be having class discussions during each class. You can get credit for participation in discussion by speaking during these discussions or posting on the class discussion board. There will also be several structured discussions (café conversations, debates, and mini-tutorials) scheduled during the semester.

The café conversations are designed to develop outcome [2], and involve four to seven central participants who may prepare individually. The debates are designed to develop outcome [3] and involve six central participants who will prepare in groups of three. The mini-tutorials are designed to develop outcomes [2] and [4] and involve three central participants who will prepare as a group. Mini-tutorials are not in the formal schedule – let me know if you would like to lead one. They are a chance to deepen your understanding of that week's content and try out the role of the teacher/facilitator.

**'Attendance':** You will get credit for attending class by submitting at least one short assignment (reading, writing, or both) to me at or before the beginning of class. These assignments will often be used during class, and they count as your preparation for that day's discussion. You will get credit for 'attendance' by submitting an assignment even if you are unable to physically come to class that day.

### 3.2 Papers One and Two

The papers are designed to directly develop outcomes [2] and [3], and indirectly develop outcome [1]. Several possible paper topics will be provided for the two papers three weeks in advance of the paper deadline. Each topic will ask students to write an explanation and an evaluation of a philosophical view that we read and discussed in class. The first paper will be four (4) to five (5) pages, and the second paper will be five (5) to seven (7) pages, double-spaced size 12 font. The rubric for these papers is as follows:

Explanation	Evaluation	Framing
<b>A+</b> Accurate, concise, well-explained, easier to follow <b>A-</b> than the text	<b>A+</b> Novel, apt, and thoroughly considered argument <b>A-</b> and/or objections	<b>A+</b> Engaging thesis, clear and effective structure <b>A-</b>
<b>B+</b> Mostly correct, coherent explanation of claim based on text <b>B-</b>	<b>B+</b> Aptly engages with the question, makes an argument <b>B-</b>	<b>B+</b> Solid thesis, well-planned and easy to follow structure <b>B-</b>
<b>C+</b> Significant mistakes, not fully clear, does not show independent study of text <b>C-</b>	<b>C+</b> Argument / claims are not clear or not apt for topic <b>C-</b>	<b>C+</b> Not entirely clear thesis, moderately clear structure <b>C-</b>
<b>D+</b> Insufficient explanation <b>D</b> <b>D-</b>	<b>D+</b> Insufficient evaluation <b>D</b> <b>D-</b>	<b>D+</b> No thesis statement, unclear structure <b>D-</b>

## 4 Important Dates

January 29	Paper One topics assigned
February 23	Deadline for Paper One
March 25	Paper Two topics assigned
April 19	Deadline for Paper Two
TBD	structured discussions

## 5 Course Policies

### 5.1 Electronics and recording

Laptops and cell phones are not to be used during class. Cell phones should be silenced and physically put away, and laptops should be closed. Exceptions are made for laptops that can be folded flat to the tabletop to be used as a reading/writing tablet, in which case only the readings or note taking program should be open during class. Tablets are allowed with the same restrictions, and should also be flat on the table rather than propped up. This policy is in place in order to encourage discussion, connection with classmates, shared focus, and to minimize distractions to others who can see your screen.

Working through philosophical material takes practice, time and a willingness to try out different ideas and change one's mind. To encourage an environment for this to occur, students participating in the course must agree not to make their

own recordings of class sessions. If there is an accessibility request for recordings, I will let the class know, and recordings will be deleted at the conclusion of the semester. **Pennsylvania is a ‘two-party consent’ state – by law, everyone in the conversation must agree for it to be recorded.**

Please see §7.2 for more information regarding requests for disability accommodations.

## 5.2 Office Hours

No appointment is needed to attend office hours – please feel free to drop by! I am also available to meet by appointment. I will be holding one of my office hours on zoom. Please know that this is available to you especially if you are feeling under the weather. Take the time to rest and keep your colleagues healthy, knowing that I am committed to helping you catch up!

## 5.3 E-mail

Please use the Canvas inbox feature for communications related to this class. I check that inbox, as well as my Pitt e-mail, (at least) once per weekday during the semester. Note that this means that I may not receive requests for meetings, extensions, etc. on the same day they are made – please plan accordingly.

In general, I do not address substantive philosophical questions over e-mail. These questions are usually best addressed in office hours or during class discussions.

Please see §7.4 for the university policy regarding checking your Pitt e-mail.

## 5.4 Late work and extensions

Late assignments will be marked down by 1/3 of a letter grade (e.g., from A- to B+) for each day that they are late, up to a maximum on one full letter grade, i.e. three days. After this, assignments will not be accepted. However, I almost always grant deadline extension requests provided they are made at least 24 hours before the assignment’s due date.

## 5.5 Grading

Assignments are usually returned to students within two weeks of receiving them if they are to be graded with feedback. Assignments that are graded without feedback are usually returned within one week.

I reserve the right to interview students regarding the content of their written work to verify understanding and authorship before grading their assignments. See §7.3 for the university's statement regarding academic integrity.

## 6 Course Content

Week 1	January 11	What makes something good? <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i></li></ul>
Week 2	January 18	Virtue and the good life <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> I.7-8 , II.1-6, III.</li></ul>
Week 3	January 25	Utilitarianism <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bentham, <i>Principles of Morals and Legislation</i>, chapters 1 and 2</li><li>• Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> chapter 2</li></ul>
Week 4	January 29 February 1	First paper topics assigned Utilitarianism <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Smart, J. J. C. (1956). Extreme and restricted utilitarianism. <i>Philosophical Quarterly</i> 6 (25):344-354.</li><li>• Nozick, “The experience machine”</li></ul>
Week 5	February 8	Affluence and aid <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Singer, Peter (1972). Famine, affluence, and morality. <i>Philosophy and Public Affairs</i> 1 (3):229-243.</li></ul>
Week 6	February 15	Sentimentalism <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Hume, <i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i>, book III part i</li></ul>

Week 7	February 22	<p>Kant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kant, Groundwork for the metaphysics of morals, Preface and section 1</li> </ul>
	February 23	Paper 1 due
Week 8	February 29	<p>Kant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kant, Groundwork for the metaphysics of morals, section 2</li> <li>• Foot, Philippa (1972). Morality as a system of hypothetical imperatives. <i>Philosophical Review</i> 81 (3):305-316.</li> </ul>
Week 9	March 7	<p>Children and animals</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schapiro, Tamar (1999). What is a child? <i>Ethics</i> 109 (4):715–738.</li> <li>• Anderson, Elizabeth (2004). Animal rights and the values of nonhuman life. In Cass R. Sunstein &amp; Martha Craven Nussbaum (eds.), <i>Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions</i>. Oxford University Press. pp. 277-298.</li> </ul>
Spring Break	March 11-15	Do something that you wish you did more often
Week 10	March 21	<p>Consequentialism vs deontology</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thomson, Judith Jarvis (1976). Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem. <i>The Monist</i> 59 (2):204-217.</li> </ul>
Week 11	March 25 March 28	<p>Second paper topics assigned Should we be maximally moral?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wolf, Susan (1982). Moral saints. <i>Journal of Philosophy</i> 79 (8):419-439.</li> </ul>

Week 12 April 4	<p>Enhancement and procreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DeGrazia, David (2014). Moral enhancement, freedom, and what we (should) value in moral behaviour. <i>Journal of Medical Ethics</i> 40 (6):361-368.</li> <li>• Savulescu, Julian (2001). Procreative Beneficence: Why We Should Select the Best Children. <i>Bioethics</i> 15 (5-6):413-426.</li> </ul>
Week 13 April 11	<p>Enhancement and procreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sandel, Michael J. (2004). The Case Against Perfection. <i>The Atlantic</i> (April):1-11.</li> <li>• Levy, N. (2002). Deafness, culture, and choice. <i>Journal of Medical Ethics</i> 28 (5):284-285.</li> </ul>
Week 14 April 18	<p>Human development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nussbaum, Martha (2003). Capabilities as Fundamental Entitlements: Sen and Social Justice. <i>Feminist Economics</i> 9 (2-3):33-59.</li> </ul>
April 19	Paper 2 due

## 7 University Policies and Resources

### 7.1 Your well-being matters

College/Graduate school can be an exciting and challenging time for students. Taking time to care for yourself and seeking appropriate support can help you achieve your academic and professional goals. You are encouraged to maintain a healthy lifestyle by eating a balanced diet, exercising regularly, avoiding drugs and alcohol, getting enough sleep, and taking time to relax.

It can be helpful to remember that we all benefit from assistance and guidance at times, and there are many resources available to support your well-being while you are at Pitt. If you or anyone you know experiences overwhelming academic stress, persistent difficult feelings and/or challenging life events, you are strongly

encouraged to seek support. In addition to reaching out to friends and loved ones, consider connecting with a faculty member you trust for assistance connecting to helpful resources. The University Counseling Center is also here for you. You can call 412-648-7930 at any time to connect with a clinician.

If you or someone you know is feeling suicidal, please call the University Counseling Center at any time at 412-648-7930. You can also contact Resolve Crisis Network at 888-796-8226. If the situation is life threatening, call Pitt Police at 412-624-2121 or dial 911.

## **7.2 Disability accommodations**

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting an accommodation, you are encouraged to contact both your instructor and Disability Resources and Services, 140 William Pitt Union, 412-648-7890, [drsrecep@pitt.edu](mailto:drsrecep@pitt.edu) as early as possible in the term. See the university's page on Disability Resources and Services for more information.

## **7.3 Academic integrity**

Cheating/plagiarism will not be tolerated. Students suspected of violating the University of Pittsburgh Policy on Academic Integrity, from the February 1974 Senate Committee on Tenure and Academic Freedom reported to the Senate Council, will be required to participate in the outlined procedural process as initiated by the instructor. A minimum sanction of a zero score for the quiz or exam will be imposed.

View the complete policy [here](#).

## **7.4 E-mail**

Each student is issued a University e-mail address ([username@pitt.edu](mailto:username@pitt.edu)) upon admittance. This e-mail address may be used by the University for official communication with students. Students are expected to read e-mail sent to this account on a regular basis. Failure to read and react to University communications in a timely manner does not absolve the student from knowing and complying with the content of the communications. The University provides an e-mail forwarding service that allows students to read their e-mail via other service providers (e.g., Hotmail, AOL, Yahoo). Students that choose to forward their e-mail from their [pitt.edu](http://pitt.edu) address to another address do so at their own risk. If e-mail is lost as a result of forwarding, it does not absolve the student from responding to official communications sent to

their University e-mail address. To forward e-mail sent to your University account, go to <http://accounts.pitt.edu>, log into your account, click on Edit Forwarding Addresses, and follow the instructions on the page. Be sure to log out of your account when you have finished. (View this PDF for the full E-mail Communication Policy)

## 7.5 Sexual misconduct

The University is committed to combating sexual misconduct. As a result, you should know that University faculty and staff members are required to report any instances of sexual misconduct, including harassment and sexual violence, to the University's Title IX office so that the victim may be provided appropriate resources and support options. What this means is that as your professor, I am required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct that are directly reported to me, or of which I am somehow made aware.

There are two important exceptions to this requirement about which you should be aware:

A list of the designated University employees who, as counselors and medical professionals, do not have this reporting responsibility and can maintain confidentiality, can be found [HERE](#).

An important exception to the reporting requirement exists for academic work. Disclosures about sexual misconduct that are shared as part of an academic project, classroom discussion, or course assignment, are not required to be disclosed to the University's Title IX office.

If you are the victim of sexual misconduct, Pitt encourages you to reach out to these resources:

- Title IX Office: 412-648-7860
- SHARE @ the University Counseling Center: 412-648-7930 (8:30 A.M. TO 5 P.M. M-F) and 412-648-7856 (AFTER BUSINESS HOURS)

If you have a safety concern, please contact the University of Pittsburgh Police, 412-624-2121.

Other reporting information is available [HERE](#).