

PHIL 310 Introduction to Ethics – Spr 2017

Instructor Information

Contact Information

Jeff Dale (JD), adjunct professor, www.JDphilosophy.com.
DaleJ@crc.losrios.edu, or use the email tool in the course's D2L site.

Class Meetings

MW 1:30 – 2:50 pm, BS 128 (class #14445).
Final exam W 5/17, 12:45 – 2:45 pm, BS 128.

Office Drop-Ins and Appointments

Office drop-ins:

- W 10:00 – 11:00 am, BS 143.
- Spring break: no office drop-in time.
- Final exam week: same time and place unless I notify you otherwise.

For other times, email for appointment.

Communications

I generally reply to email within a day, and often much sooner, but I can't guarantee my availability at all times. Students should be proactive so as to avoid the need for last-minute email exchanges, in which I might be unable to give timely replies. Please do not leave me handwritten messages or try to reach me at the department, because my receipt of such communications may be delayed by several days.

Special Note

All Los Rios CCD faculty are considered "mandated reporters" for suspected child abuse or neglect under the California Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting Act. Accordingly, I am bound by the reporting requirements of Penal Code 11166. Information is available at wserver.losrios.edu/hr/HR%20Forms/MandatedReporterGuidebook.pdf.

Course Information

Catalog Description

"The application of theories developed by traditional and contemporary moral philosophy to the ethical problems, dilemmas, and issues of today." 3.0 units. No prerequisites.

Texts and Readings

Exploring Ethics, An Introductory Anthology, Steven M. Cahn, 4th Edition (2016), ISBN 978-0-190-27363-7, available at the bookstore and elsewhere.

Logical Reasoning, Bradley H. Dowden, free via D2L or online at www.csus.edu/indiv/d/dowdenb/#logicalreasoning.

Other readings free via D2L or online.

Level of Course

Students in this course are expected to have college-level writing skills, such as would be represented by successful completion of ENGWR 300 or the equivalent. Students without that level of skill will probably need to work harder than average to meet the performance standards of this course.

Statement on Philosophy and Pedagogy

Philosophy is not a “soft” subject. Some people think that philosophy is characterized mainly by vague but deep-sounding notions, and a philosophy class is about sharing our subjective reactions to such notions. This conception bears little resemblance to what you’ll generally find in academic philosophy.

In part, philosophy resembles science. We strive for clarity and precision. We aim for objective truth, as best we can determine it. We ask skeptical questions and carefully judge the quality of the answers. But whereas science analyzes things of the world (empirical data), philosophy analyzes *ideas* – including ideas about the nature of reality and of knowledge (the foundations of science), about the nature of ourselves, and about how to judge goodness, beauty, and truth, and how to defend those judgments. In some ways, this is easier than science – thought experiments don’t require expensive lab facilities or extensive data collection. But in its focus on the abstract rather than the concrete, and in its exploration of difficult questions of value, philosophy offers plenty of challenges for even the sharpest intellect.

Studying philosophy generally does not involve learning a large body of facts – we might spend an hour wrestling with a single idea. What it does involve is a sustained effort in improving the strength and agility of one’s thought – valuable brain training that’s hard to find elsewhere. Accordingly, I design my student assessment plans to be a 50-50 balance between (1) in-class testing and (2) exercises in homework, discussion, and essay writing to generate and reward the investment in thinking skill – philosophical astuteness both in the course and in life beyond the course. I will challenge you, but if you persevere, and seek help when you need it, you may be surprised at how much you can learn.

General Education Requirements

This course meets the following GE requirements: AA/AS Area I; CSU Area C2; IGETC Area 3B.

Learning Objectives

1. Identify important questions and conceptions within ethics, distinguish from among divergent interpretations those that are better supported and those that are less well supported, construct well supported interpretations of diverse viewpoints, and reason well about written and oral discourse.
 - 1a: Evaluate information concerning central issues within ethics for quality, validity, and bias to determine if it is objective and reliable.
 - 1b: Evaluate the relationship of language to logic and analyze, criticize, and rationally justify points of view concerning ethical issues.
2. Reason inductively and deductively concerning ethical issues; reach conclusions about ethical issues based on sound or cogent inferences drawn from unambiguous statements of knowledge of belief.
 - 2a: Distinguish fact from non-factual judgment concerning ethical issues, belief from knowledge, and fallacious reasoning from correct (invalid or weak) reasoning concerning ethical issues.
 - 2b: Apply ethical reasoning skills to ethical issues and work toward a personal resolution of ethical issues.
3. Demonstrate the ability to engage unethical reasoning necessary to exercise responsibility as an ethical individual, professional, local, and global citizen.
 - 3a: Show an appreciation of ethical principles as applied to personal and civic choices.

Course Plan

- The first part of the course is for development of a framework of understanding for philosophical thinking, which is both to support student success in the remainder of the course and to provide a general philosophical education that non-majors might not get anywhere else: belief, knowledge, and objectivity, and the conduct of discussion; conceptual analysis, logical reasoning, and the formulation and analysis of arguments.
- The remainder of the course is in three parts to address each of three areas of the study of ethics: foundations of moral theory, including responses to common challenges; particular moral theories built on that foundation, with emphasis on assessing and comparing degree of fit to the moral facts; application to opposing views on important contemporary moral issues.
- The latter part of the course also includes a progressive exercise in argumentative essay writing: argument analysis, argument critique, thesis and outline, initial version, and revised version.

Student Work and Assessments

Approach to Study

The course is designed to reward consistent engagement and study throughout the semester. Students are advised to ensure that they have mastered each unit of material before we move on to the next unit. When students fall behind, their grades tend to suffer in multiple ways as they struggle to understand the new material. The final exam is cumulative, and cramming to learn large blocks of previously neglected material in the days leading up to the final exam is unlikely to be adequate.

Students should review “How to Do Well in a College (Philosophy) Class,” by CSUS philosophy professor Matt McCormick, at sites.google.com/site/mccormickphilosophy/home/how-to-do-well-in-a-college-philosophy-class.

Grading

Semester scores will be calculated according to the following distribution: Discussion 10%; Homework 15%; Essay Project 25%; Quizzes 25%; Final Exam 25%.

Each assessment will be scored on a 100-point scale. The semester score will be a weighted average, with letter grades according to the following minimums: 90 A, 80 B, 65 C, 50 D. CRC doesn't assign +/- grades.

The department discourages grade inflation and fixed grading curves. To earn a B or better will require better than satisfactory performance. The course grade distribution is not predetermined, but will reflect actual performance of the students in the class.

Discussion

Class discussion contributes significantly to students' understanding of the material. Discussion credit is available for students' productive use of class time, as reflected in (1) participation in class discussion by contribution of relevant questions or comments, and (2) reading checks to demonstrate preparation for class discussion. A student can earn a high discussion score by excelling in *either* participation *or* reading preparation.

Scoring for participation rewards contribution to multiple class meetings rather than multiple contributions within class meetings, thus encouraging participation in a variety of topics and enabling less talkative students to score highly without having to keep pace with the more talkative students. A student who earns (at least) one participation credit per 200 minutes of class time can expect an A in discussion regardless of reading check scores.

Most class meetings start with a reading check. A student who averages (at least) seven correct out of every twelve reading check questions can expect an A in discussion regardless of participation. Students may find this average difficult to attain without careful and repeat reading.

Homework

The homework is intended to build upon students' learning, as well as to provide structure to students' questions for best use of our class meetings. Accordingly, multiple submissions will be accepted for many of the homework assignments, so that students can attempt the homework before class discussion, prepare questions to bring to class meetings, and attempt the homework again afterward.

Students will earn credit for their 12 highest-scoring homework submissions. There will be 20 homework opportunities: one for academic integrity, 17 relating to the material, and two for write-ups on philosophy events attended. All homework assignments will be distributed and submitted via D2L.

Essay Project

There will be an argumentative essay of about five pages, to be graded on both content and mechanics. The overall essay project score will reflect the essay and three related submissions assigned for the development of the essay, whose due dates will be prior to the start of work on the essay itself. These related submissions are used to scaffold students' work in development of the essay, so that weaknesses in the foundation can be fixed before the essay is built upon them. All essay project assignments will be distributed and submitted via D2L.

Students will have the opportunity to submit a completed essay (*not* a "rough draft") by an earlier deadline in order to receive detailed comments, which can then be used to revise or rewrite the essay for final submission. Students are advised not to underestimate the value of this opportunity, and the likely cost of putting inadequate effort into the essay. Competent philosophical writing requires more precision than what many students have yet experienced, even in other classes' college-level writing. Students starting the essay the day before it's due are likely to find the task more complex and challenging than they expected; the risk of a serious hit to the semester grade is high, and the temptation to cheat (making matters even worse) may be high as well.

The following two links from the CSUS philosophy department are very useful, so I recommend that you refer to them periodically as you write: www.csus.edu/phil/guidance/writing%20guidelines.html and www.csus.edu/phil/guidance/how-to-analyze.html. The grading standards of the CSUS philosophy department are applicable to this course: www.csus.edu/phil/guidance/grading-standards.html. Students who need individual assistance with writing should contact the CRC Reading Writing Center (RWC) (www.crc.losrios.edu/services/rwc) well ahead of deadlines.

Quizzes and Final Exam

There will be six in-class quizzes, from which each student's top five scores will count toward the semester grade, and an in-class final exam. Students will not need to bring a blue book, Scantron form, or other paper to these tests unless otherwise informed. The final exam will be comprehensive; students should study consistently throughout the semester rather than relying on cramming at the end.

Policies

Attendance and Drops

In accordance with CRC's policies, students are expected to attend all class meetings, and may be dropped from the course for non-attendance under the following circumstances:

- Missed the first class meeting: dropped, unless there are enough available enrollment slots.
- Missed the first three class meetings: may be dropped regardless of the demand for enrollment slots.
- Missed any four class meetings: may be dropped at my sole discretion.

Reading and Preparation for Class Meetings

Students are expected to do *all* of the assigned reading *before* the first class meeting for which it's assigned, and to come to class prepared to ask questions and discuss the material. Class meetings are conducted with the

assumption that students have done the reading. Students should anticipate that careful and repeat reading will be needed for adequate understanding, and are encouraged to jot down questions while reading and to bring them to class meetings.

Conduct of Discussion

Doing philosophy involves the open and critical discussion of ideas. Even the expression of a mistaken idea may be useful in advancing understanding. And no idea is so good as to be above challenge or exempt from justification. Good discussion requires an environment in which all participants feel safe and valued. *People deserve respect, but ideas do not.* Harassment, personal attacks, and contemptuous behavior will not be tolerated. Any student with concerns about classmates' behavior should inform me as soon as practical.

Doing philosophy also requires concentration and careful thought. Accordingly, students should take care to minimize distractions, to themselves and to others, in class meetings. We will try to keep the rules casual about arrival and departure, use of electronics, and classroom procedure.

Staying Informed

Students are responsible for attending class meetings (and obtaining notes from other students for classes missed), for regularly checking email at the student's campus address, for referring to this syllabus regularly and following the class schedule, and for following updates to content in the course's D2L site.

Use of Technology

Each student is responsible for maintaining regular and reliable access to D2L and campus email, for understanding these systems' use, and for verifying successful electronic submission of work. I cannot provide technical support or accommodations for technical difficulties. Students encountering technical difficulties are advised to make alternate arrangements (such as the use of a friend's computer or an on-campus computer lab) and/or to communicate with campus technical support personnel (helpdesk.losrios.edu) as needed.

Turnitin compares each written submission with an extensive database of prior submissions, links, and publications, and displays possible matches and a "similarity score." It does not determine whether plagiarism has occurred; that determination is made upon a thorough assessment for which the similarity report is merely a tool. Turnitin is very good at detecting patterns of text even when deliberately obscured. Submissions to Turnitin should not include names or other identifying info; Turnitin stores submissions anonymously, and links to student accounts are accessible only to me. Submissions are retained in Turnitin's database for future comparisons.

Video or audio recording of any portion of our class meetings is not permitted, except in accordance with properly documented disability accommodations or as may be required by law.

Late Work and Missed Tests

All assignments, with one exception (discussed below), are scored at zero if not submitted by their due dates. Quizzes and the final exam generally cannot be taken after the class meetings in which they are scheduled, and will be scored at zero if missed.

The final essay version may be submitted after its due date, but at a scoring reduction of 10 points out of 100 per *calendar* day, rounded up. (For example, if the essay would've been scored at 75 on its merits, it'll be scored at 65 if submitted late by up to one calendar day.) All other essay-related submissions, including the initial essay version, are scored at zero if not submitted by their due dates.

Students who, for some good reason, need an exception to any of the policies about late work and missed tests should request an exception in advance, with appropriate documentation. Exceptions are subject to my sole judgment of what counts as a good reason. (An exception is not needed for a final essay version to be accepted late, but would be needed to avoid the applicable scoring reduction.)

No Extra Credit

Students should not anticipate opportunities for extra credit to compensate for poor performance, poor use of class time, or missed assessments. Students are responsible for exerting sufficient effort for the assessments described above, which are designed to be a fair reflection of student performance.

Disability Accommodations

Students needing disability accommodations should provide me the appropriate documentation from the Disability Support Programs & Services (DSP&S) (www.crc.losrios.edu/services/dsps) at least two weeks prior to the need for accommodation.

Academic Integrity

Cheating, including plagiarism, is a serious offense. Students bear full responsibility for understanding and complying with university and course policies on academic integrity. Students should review the policies and information at www.crc.losrios.edu/catalog/geninfo/integrity. Students should also review the CSUS library's plagiarism info site at library.csus.edu/content2.asp?pageID=353.

Students should understand that plagiarism includes not only direct quotation without quotation marks or attribution, but also paraphrasing without attribution, or otherwise using the ideas of others (including me or fellow students) as though they were one's own. Note also that plagiarism can result from the careless error of copying another's ideas or words and forgetting to cite the source. Students are urged to protect themselves by developing the habit of citing all sources *immediately* upon copying or jotting down other people's words or ideas, even in an outline or rough draft that's not intended to be seen by anyone else.

Students should also understand that facilitating other students' cheating is itself a form of cheating. For example, if Student #1 gives a copy of his/her essay to Student #2, and #2 plagiarizes the essay, #1 may be accused of cheating. Students are urged to protect themselves by never risking their work being copied in this way. Note also that students can be penalized *after* leaving the class, including the rescinding of their recorded grades in the class, if they facilitate the cheating of students in later semesters.

The department takes academic integrity very seriously. A violation may result in a zero on the applicable assignment or test, communication of the incident to the dean, and the filing of a Referral for Student Code of Conduct Violation with the Vice President of Student Services, for administrative sanctions up to and including expulsion from the college.

Academic Integrity Homework Requirement (AIHR)

Completion of assigned academic integrity homework is required in order to be eligible for a non-failing grade in the course. The primary opportunity to fulfill the AIHR is by completion of homework assignment #1 (up to three attempts) with a score of at least 70. Students not fulfilling the AIHR in this way will be given a writing assignment alternative. Delay in fulfillment of the AIHR may result in other assessments being scored at zero.

Tentative Schedule

1	M 1/16 *	Campus holiday.
	W 1/18	In-class material: course introduction; overview of philosophy and of ethics.
2	M 1/23	<p>Read before class: policies and information on academic integrity: www.crc.losrios.edu/catalog/geninfo/integrity.</p> <p>Read before class: this syllabus.</p> <p>Philosophical Framework</p> <p>Read before class: “Belief” and “Objectivity,” Jeff Dale, in D2L.</p> <p>Read before class: “No, you’re not entitled to your opinion,” Patrick Stokes, theconversation.com/no-youre-not-entitled-to-your-opinion-9978, or www.iflscience.com/brain/no-youre-not-entitled-your-opinion.</p>
	W 1/25	<p>Read before class: “Knowledge,” Jeff Dale, in D2L.</p> <p>Read before class: Dowden chapter 2, “Claims, Issues, and Arguments,” only the sections up to and including “Conditionals and the Word <i>If</i>.”</p>
	F 1/27 *	Last day to drop for a refund.
	Su 1/29 *	Last day to enroll. Last day to drop without a W on transcript.
3	M 1/30	<p>Read before class: “Who Are You and What Are You Doing Here?” Mark Edmundson, www.oxfordamerican.org/magazine/item/486-who-are-you-and-what-are-you-doing-here.</p> <p>Read before class: Dowden chapter 2, “Claims, Issues, and Arguments,” remaining sections starting with “Deductively Valid and Inductively Strong.”</p> <p>Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #1 (AIHR – see above).</p>
	W 2/1	<p>Read before class: “Philosophy’s True Home,” Scott Soames, opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/03/07/philosophys-true-home.</p> <p>Read before class: “The Myth of the Unemployed Humanities Major,” Wilson Peden, www.aacu.org/leap/liberal-education-nation-blog/myth-unemployed-humanities-major.</p> <p>Read before class: Dowden chapter 12 (“Aristotelian Logic and Venn-Euler Diagrams”), only the section “Aristotle’s Logic of Classes.”</p> <p>Continued discussion of Dowden chapter 2.</p> <p>Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #2.</p>
	F 2/3 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #3.
4	M 2/6	<p>Foundations</p> <p>Read before class: Cahn 5. “How Not to Answer Moral Questions,” Tom Regan.</p> <p>Read before class: <i>Euthyphro</i>, Plato, classics.mit.edu/Plato/euthyphro.html.</p> <p>Read before class: Cahn 6. “God and Morality,” Steven M. Cahn.</p> <p>Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #4.</p>
	W 2/8	<p>In-class material: Euthyphro dilemma. No reading assigned.</p> <p>In class: Quiz #1: readings on belief, objectivity, and knowledge; Dowden chapters 2 and 12.</p>

	Su 2/12 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #5.
5	M 2/13	Read before class: "Framework of Ethics," Jeff Dale, in D2L. Discussion of homework #5.
	W 2/15	Read before class: Cahn 7. "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism," James Rachels. Continued discussion of "Framework of Ethics."
	F 2/17 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #6. (Campus holiday.)
6	M 2/20 *	Campus holiday.
	W 2/22	Read before class: Cahn 8. "Right and Wrong," Thomas Nagel. Continued discussion of relativism. In class: Quiz #2: "How Not to Answer Moral Questions"; "God and Morality" and the modern Euthyphro dilemma; "Framework of Ethics."
7	M 2/27	Read before class: Cahn 9. "Egoism and Moral Scepticism," James Rachels. Moral Theories Read before class: "Overview of Utilitarianism," Jeff Dale, in D2L.
	W 3/1	Continued discussion of utilitarianism.
	F 3/3 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #7 and #8.
8	M 3/6	Read before class: "Immanuel Kant: Metaphysics," section 8 ("Kant's Ethics") and section 9 ("Kant's Criticisms of Utilitarianism"), Matt McCormick, www.iep.utm.edu/kantmeta . Read before class: Cahn 13. "The Categorical Imperative," Immanuel Kant. Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #9.
	W 3/8	Continued discussion of Kant. In class: Quiz #3: Relativism; "Right and Wrong"; egoism.
	F 3/10 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #10.
	Su 3/12 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Essay Argument Analysis.
9	M 3/13	Discussion of Essay Argument Analysis. (Essay Argument Critique due T 3/21.)
	W 3/15	Read before class: Dowden chapter 6, "Writing to Convince Others." Read before class: Cahn 20. "The Social Contract," Thomas Hobbes. Read before class: Cahn 21. <i>A Theory of Justice</i> , John Rawls.
	F 3/17 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #11.
10	M 3/20	Read before class: Cahn 17. "The Nature of Virtue," Aristotle. In class: Quiz #4: Utilitarianism; Kant; Dowden chapter 6.
	T 3/21 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Essay Argument Critique.
	W 3/22	Discussion of Essay Argument Critique. (Essay Thesis and Outline due T 3/28.)
	F 3/24 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #12.

11	M 3/27	“Virtue Ethics,” Bernard Mayo, in D2L. Read before class: Cahn 19. “The Ethics of Care,” Virginia Held.
	T 3/28 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Essay Thesis and Outline.
	W 3/29	Discussion of Essay Thesis and Outline. (Essay Version 1 due Su 4/16.) Moral Issues Read before class: Cahn 25. “On the Moral and Legal Status of Abortion,” Mary Anne Warren.
	F 3/31 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #13 and #14.
12	M 4/3	Continued discussion of Warren. In class: Quiz #5: Social contract theory; Aristotle and virtue ethics; care ethics.
	W 4/5	In class: essay workshop – attendance <i>not</i> optional.
	Week	Campus holiday.
	Su 4/16 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Essay Version 1. (After your score is posted, email me if you want comments. Essay Version 2 due Su 5/7.) Last day to drop with a W on transcript.
13	M 4/17	Read before class: Cahn 24. “A Defense of Abortion,” Judith Jarvis Thomson. Continued discussion of Warren.
	W 4/19	Continued discussion of Thomson.
14	M 4/24	Read before class: Cahn 26. “Why Abortion is Immoral,” Don Marquis. Continued discussion of Thomson.
	W 4/26	Read before class: Cahn 30. “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” Peter Singer. Read before class: “World Hunger and Moral Obligation: The Case Against Singer,” John Arthur, in D2L.
	F 4/28 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #15.
15	M 5/1	Read before class: Cahn 36. “The Morality of Capital Punishment,” Walter Berns. Read before class: Cahn 37. “The Death Penalty as a Symbolic Issue,” Stephen Nathanson. In-class material: capital punishment overview. Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #16.
	W 5/3	Continued discussion of capital punishment. In class: Quiz #6: Abortion; Affluence.
	Su 5/7 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Essay Version 2.
16	M 5/8	Read before class: Cahn 44. “Philosophical Problems for Environmentalism,” Elliott Sober.
	T 5/9 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #17.
	W 5/10	In-class material: grounding of moral obligations. No reading assigned. Continued discussion of environmentalism.
	F 5/12 *	Due in D2L by 11:59 pm: Homework #18.

	W 5/17	12:45 – 2:45 pm in regular classroom: Final Exam (comprehensive).
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* Non-meeting day.

Philosophy events for homework credit

List of approved events in Homework folder of D2L will be kept updated. Let me know of other events you find; I'll approve them if they seem to have substantial philosophical content.

Write-ups due in D2L by 11:59 pm, *same day of event*; refer to write-up instructions in Homework folder of D2L. Homework credit for up to two submissions.