

## PHIL 3201: Advanced Ethics (3 credits)

**SECTION 001:** LA 370, Thursday, 4:30 p.m – 7:00 p.m.

### Contact Information

**Instructor:** Dr. Surprenant  
**Office:** UNO: LA 387  
**Office Hours:** M:2:00-4:00,T:12:15-1:00pm,Th:12:15-3:30 (and by appointment)  
**Office Phone:** (504) 280-6819  
**Email:** csurpren@uno.edu  
**Course Webpages:** Accessed via Moodle.

### Required Texts

There are no required books for this course. All required readings are available on Moodle.

### Course Description

**CATALOG DESCRIPTION:** A systematic study of major positions, problems, and concepts in ethical theory, as represented in classical and contemporary works.

**COURSE OVERVIEW:** This course is an advanced study of ethics. Immanuel Kant, one of the most significant Western philosophers, noted that philosophical investigation (where 'philosophy' is understood broadly) could be divided into three disciplines: physics, ethics, and logic. Ethics, for Kant, which has both a theoretical and practical component, considers the "laws of freedom" under which an individual acts (the theoretical component), or the "laws of a human being's will insofar as it is affected by nature" (the practical component).

This semester we will take our inspiration from Kant and consider both the theoretical and practical component of ethics. We will consider such topics as the nature of morality and virtue, the role of the state and/or community in helping to cultivate virtue within individuals, the obligations (if any) we have to individuals both inside and outside of our state, and the best construction of a state and its social and economic policies given various moral considerations.

A primary focus throughout the entire semester will be on learning how to read, understand, evaluate, and construct philosophical arguments, and then engaging with contemporary scholars about these arguments and ideas. In this way, this course will also serve as an introduction to being a philosopher. Unique to this course is that during the semester we will read four papers from contemporary scholars. Each of these scholars will then visit our class the following week to engage in a discussion with us about the topics central to the paper.

### Student Learning Outcomes

Upon successfully completing this course, students will be able to do the following:

- understand theories central to moral philosophy and how these theories can be applied to contemporary problems
- work with philosophical concepts and methods, and to construct and evaluate arguments
- to participate in classroom discussion, developing and displaying an ability and readiness to defend one's own point of view while listening openly but carefully to others
- to demonstrate a willingness to entertain criticism, formulate and reply to reasonable objections, and represent opposing views both critically and sympathetically
- to read both primary and secondary texts, analyze the arguments contained in them correctly, and interact with the scholars who advanced those arguments

## Grading

Requirement		Final grade	
<b>Midterm Exam</b>	(30%) 30 points	<b>A</b>	100 – 89.5 points
<b>Final Paper</b>	(50%) 50 points	<b>B</b>	89.4 – 79.5 points
<b>Participation</b>	(20%) 20 points	<b>C</b>	79.4 – 69.5 points
		<b>D</b>	69.4 – 59.5 points
		<b>F</b>	59.4 — 0 points

## Course Requirements

**Attendance and Intelligent Participation:** The course will be conducted as a mixture of lecture and discussion. Therefore, it is essential that you come to class having done the reading and thought about what you have read in advance

For classes meeting with our visiting scholars, you must submit a thoughtful question about the scholar's paper no later than 11:59pm on the Sunday before the scholar's visit.

Your final grade may be raised by no more than a full letter based on intelligent and thoughtful class participation throughout the semester and noticeable improvement in the quality of your contributions and work.

**Midterm Exam:** Your midterm exam is due no later than Sunday, September 29. It should be submitted via the assignment upload feature on Moodle. Exam questions will be distributed in class at least a week before the deadline. If you fail to submit your exam on time, your final grade will be lowed by 1/3rd of a letter grade for each day it is late.

**Long Paper:** A paper of no longer than 5000 words (not including references) is due no later than Sunday, December 8. You will select your own paper topic, but all topics must be approved by me in advance. You are also strongly encourage to meet with me as you develop your topic and the argument in your paper. To assist you in developing your papers, a paper prospectus will be due no later than Sunday, November 10. Additional paper guidelines have been posted on Moodle.

## Course Policies

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** Academic dishonesty undermines the academic enterprise and includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarizing, tampering with academic records or exams, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. If you're foolish enough to do something like this, you'll be expelled from the course with a failing grade and will be reported to the university.

**ATTENDANCE:** Attendance is expected at all class meetings. You may miss one class without penalty. For each class missed beyond the first, your final grade will be lowered by one half of a letter grade.

**LATE WORK:** Work is late one minute after the posted deadline. All late work is peanlized 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of a letter grade for each day (24 hours) it is late.

**ELECTRONICS:** Laptops and tablets are allowed in class as long as they are being used to access course reading material. Do not use them to access anything else. Do not use your phone in class. If you are on one of these devices, doing what you shouldn't be doing (e.g., texting) and I see you (and, believe me, I will see you), I will ask you to leave class.

**DISABILITY STAMENT:** UNO is committed to providing for the needs of students who have disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Students who qualify for services will receive academic modifications to which they are legally entitled. It is the responsibility of students who may require such services or modifications to register each semester with the Office of Disability Services (UC 260, 280-6222) and follow its procedures for obtaining assistance.

## Course Schedule

*Reading is due for the date listed. It is strongly suggested that you read the texts in the order listed.*

- Aug 27      Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, "Consequentialism," from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*  
 Larry Alexander and Michael Moore, "Deontological Ethics," from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*  
 Rosalind Hursthouse, "Virtue Ethics," from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*  
 Rachel Cohon, "Hume's Moral Philosophy," from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*  
 Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche's Moral and Political Philosophy," from the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*  
 Allan Bloom, "Preface" and "Introduction: Our Virtue" to *The Closing of the American Mind*
- Sept 5      John Rawls, selections from *Justice as Fairness*  
 Robert Nozick, selections from *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*
- Sept 12     Tom G. Palmer, "The Tragedy of the Welfare State"  
 Matt Zwolinski, "Classical Liberalism and the Basic Income"  
*Class will attend Pilon and Seidman panel discussion on individual welfare and aims of the state.*
- Sept 19     Plato, "Apology"  
 Aristophanes, "The Clouds"  
 Shawn Welnak, "Platonic Education and the Idols of the City"
- Sept 26     Reread: Welnak, "Platonic Education and the Idols of the City"  
 In-class discussion with Shawn Welnak (Assistant Professor of Philosophy, LIU Post)
- Oct 3      Peter Singer, "Insiders and Outsiders," from *Practical Ethics*  
 Christopher Wellman, "Immigration and Freedom of Association"  
 Javier Hidalgo, "Why Rights to Self-Determination Cannot Justify Immigration Restrictions"
- Oct 10     Reread: Javier Hidalgo, "Why Rights to Self-Determination Cannot Justify Immigration Restrictions"  
 In-class discussion with Javier Hidalgo (Assistant Professor of Political Science, Richmond)
- Oct 17     *No Class – Fall Break*
- Oct 24     *Kitzmiller v. Dover Area School District*, 400 F. Supp 2d 707 (M.D. Pa. 2005)  
 Charles L. Glenn, "Disestablishing Our Secular Schools"  
*Class will attend Forrest, Harvey, and Jeynes panel on religion liberty and public education.*
- Oct 31     Paul M. Romer, "Economic Growth" and "Process, Responsibility, and Myron's Law"  
 John Wallis, "Why Competitive Markets Aren't Self Actuating: The Political Economy of Open Access"  
 William English, "Institutional Corruption and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy"
- Nov 7      Reread: William English, "Institutional Corruption and the Crisis of Liberal Democracy"  
 In-class discussion with William English (Fellow at Harvard's Safra Center for Ethics)
- Nov 14     Peter Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"  
 G.A. Cohen, "Why Not Socialism?"  
 Jason Brennan, "Why Not Capitalism?"
- Nov 21     Reread: Jason Brennan, "Why Not Capitalism?"  
 In-class discussion with Jason Brennan (Assistant Professor of Ethics, Georgetown)
- Nov 28     *No Class - Thanksgiving*
- Dec 5      Kant, "Doctrine of the Method of Ethics," from *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*  
 Robert Kane, "Moral Education," from *Through the Moral Maze*  
 J.P. Messina and Chris W. Surprenant, "Moral Education and the Cultivation of Virtue"