

PHIL 2201: Ethics (3 credits)

SECTION 002: LA 372, TTh, 9:30 –10:45 a.m.

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Edward Johnson
Office: Liberal Arts 372
Office Hours: 11:00 – 12:00 MWF (and by appointment)
Office Telephone: (504) 280-7193
Email: erjohns1@uno.edu
Course Webpages: [Moodle](#) login page

Required Text

[1] Sommers, Christina and Fred, eds. (2013). *Vice and Virtue in Everyday Life: Introductory Readings in Ethics* (9th ed., Wadsworth), ISBN-13: 9781111837549

Course Description

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: A study of concepts of right and wrong, good and evil, and their grounds.

COURSE OVERVIEW: The first half of the course will focus on problems in moral theory: the meaning and truth of moral judgments, and the pros and cons relating to a variety of positions, such as subjectivism, relativism, egoism, utilitarianism, deontology, and so on. The second half of the course will focus on issues in “applied ethics,” and will examine controversial positions concerning abortion, world hunger, animal rights, etc.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify features of practical situations relevant to moral evaluation
- Define key concepts in ethics
- Evaluate the persuasiveness of moral arguments of different types
- Apply ethical concepts studied to new kinds of cases
- Synthesize, in effective English essays, central aspects of philosophical debate in this area
- Articulate the difference between consequentialist and deontological theories
- Explain the significance of Hume’s argument about the “Is/Ought” distinction

Grades will be based on a 100 point scale distributed as follows:

Requirement		Final grade	
Participation	(10%) 10 points	A	90 – 100 points
Reflection Paper 1	(10%) 10 points	B	80 – 81 points
Reflection Paper 2	(10%) 10 points	C	70 – 79 points
Exam 1	(20%) 20 points	D	60 – 69 points
Exam 2	(20%) 20 points	F	0 – 59 points
Final Exam	(30%) 30 points		

Course Requirements

PARTICIPATION:The class will meet on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 9:30 to 10:45, in LA 372. The Undergraduate/Graduate Catalog states: “Students are expected to attend all classes regularly and punctually. **A student who is not present when attendance is checked in a class is considered absent.**” The Attendance Policy of the Department of English states: “When a student has missed a total of 1½ weeks of classes ... the instructor may request that the student’s dean put the student on attendance probation. ... Continued absences from any ... class will subject the student to full penalties ... including failing the

course....” That reasonable policy, in the case of a class meeting twice a week, would allow for, say, three absences. **Each additional absence (beyond the three) will incur a one-and-a-half point penalty deduction from the student’s final semester average.** Attendance means attending the entire class: **attendance may be checked more than once during class.** Students who leave early without permission will be assessed ½ absence for that day. Students should be on time; those who arrive more than 20 minutes late will be assessed ½ absence for that day. Attendance at public events requires a commitment to contribute to the maintenance of public order for the sake of a shared benefit: this includes paying attention and participating appropriately.

REFLECTION PAPERS: Two “reflection papers” are due during the semester. These should be about 250-500 words (a page or two) in length, and should discuss your understanding of the material discussed in class and the readings up to that point in the semester. Reflection papers should conform to guidelines posted on Moodle, and an electronic copy should be submitted by the deadline via Moodle. A printed “hard copy” must be submitted in class on the day the paper is due. These papers should not contain any unattributed (or inadequately attributed) work that is not the student’s own thinking. Plagiarism will earn an F for the class.

LATE WORK: Late work will be accepted, at the discretion of the instructor, only with a sufficient, documented excuse, for a limited time (depending, of course, on the excuse). *Nota bene:* Confusion, or lack of understanding, is not a good excuse for not writing the reflection papers: rather, students should try to explain what they do not understand, and its significance in relation to what they do understand.

EXAMS: There will be two in-class exams, and a final exam, in which you will respond to questions about the material covered. The format will be essay/short answer. You will be expected to demonstrate in your answers that you have thought about the issues in an informed, thoughtful, and articulate way, in language showing an appropriate mastery of college-level communication skills.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and evaluating academic performance. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, the following: cheating, plagiarism, tampering with academic records and examinations, falsifying identity, and being an accessory to acts of academic dishonesty. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for further information. The Code is available online at <http://www.studentaffairs.uno.edu> [This section is quoted from mandated University language.]

ATTENDANCE: Required. See the section Participation above.

ELECTRONICS: Use of electronic devices is, in general, not allowed during class. You may use a laptop computer or a tablet to take notes, but not during exams (unless required for disability accommodations). Use of phones, e-mailing, texting, online surfing, etc., are not permitted during class.

MAKE-UP EXAMS: Make-up exams are discouraged, and the absence of support staff makes scheduling flexibility difficult. Any make-up exam (if the instructor determines that it is justified) will have to take place during the instructor's office hours.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS: It is University policy to provide, on a flexible and individualized basis, reasonable accommodations to students who have disabilities that may affect their ability to participate in course activities or to meet course requirements. Students with disabilities should contact the Office of Disability Services as well as their instructors to discuss their individual needs for accommodations. For more information please go to <http://www.ods.uno.edu> [This section is quoted from mandated University language.]

ASSESSMENT: You will be required to complete a Pre-Assessment document at the first class, and a Post-Assessment document at the last class. These will not be graded, but good-faith completion of both assessments is a requirement for passing the course. This is a component of our department's effort to evaluate and improve instruction by measuring learning outcomes. You will have a separate opportunity to fill out your own evaluation of the course.

WARNING: Learning philosophy requires the ability to examine critically, from a variety of perspectives, one's most basic assumptions about what is true and what is valuable. Critical examination involves challenging what we take for granted. Students occasionally find such an experience unsettling, as it may instill doubt about matters thought to be secure, or may require a serious engagement with ideas, language, or viewpoints the student finds threatening, or offensive, or absurd. This is especially possible in connection with controversial topics in ethics, politics, and religion. We will deal with any controversial matters in an explicit, candid, and analytical fashion. Your continued enrollment in this course constitutes acceptance of the right of other students, and the right of the professor, to explore relevant ideas, language, and viewpoints in a frank and open manner. If you object to that – if you think rational adults should be prevented from discussing certain subjects, or speaking certain words, or viewing certain images – then this is not the course for you.

PHIL 2201 Timeline *(subject to revision)*

DAY	TOPIC/READING
Aug 21	Introduction and Pre-assessment
Aug 26	Why Be Moral? (Plato, in Sommers, 140-142)
Aug 28	Religion and Its Limits (John Arthur, in Sommers, 208-215)
Sep 2	Moral Relativism (C. Fluehr-Lobban & L. Kopelman, in Sommers, 90-105)
Sep 4	Moral Relativism (L. A. Langbeyer & L. Pojman & T. Nagel, in Sommers, 106-124)
Sep 9	Self-Interest and Egoism (James Rachels, in Sommers, 158-167)
Sep 11	Self-Interest and Egoism (L. Pojman & C. McGinn & P. Singer, in Sommers, 171-189)
Sep 16	FIRST EXAM
Sep 18	Utilitarianism (John Stuart Mill, in Sommers, 219-224)
Sep 23	Utilitarianism (John Harris, in Sommers, 231-236)
Sep 25	Critique of Utilitarianism (Bernard Williams, in Sommers, 224-230)
Sep 30	Critique of Utilitarianism (Ursula LeGuin, in Sommers, 236-241)
Oct 2	Deontology (Immanuel Kant & Fred Sommers, in Sommers, 241-256)
Oct 7	Critique of Deontology (Richard Taylor, in Sommers, 256-261) [First Reflection Paper due]
Oct 9	Virtue Ethics (Aristotle & B. Mayo, in Sommers, 265-276, 295-299)
Oct 14	Virtue Ethics (Alasdair MacIntyre and Philippa Foot, in Sommers, 299-319)
Oct 16	No class: Midsemester break
Oct 21	SECOND EXAM
Oct 23	Moral Theory and "Applied Ethics"
Oct 28	Conscience and Evil (Jonathan Bennett & Philip Hallie, in Sommers, 15-33)
Oct 30	Guilt and Survival (Tzvetan Todorov & Anne Applebaum, in Sommers, 33-46)
Nov 4	Obedience and Responsibility (S. Milgram & H. Melville, in Sommers, 46-56, 60-67)
Nov 6	Foreign Aid as Obligation (Peter Singer, in Sommers, 374-380)
Nov 11	Critique of Singer (John Arthur & James Shikwati, in Sommers, 381-390)
Nov 13	Defense of Abortion (Judith Jarvis Thomson, in Sommers, 413-426) [Nov 14 is the Final Drop Date]
Nov 18	Critique of Abortion (Don Marquis, in Sommers,
Nov 20	Animal Rights (Peter Singer, in Sommers, 434-442)
Nov 25	Animal Rights (Alastair Norcross, in Sommers, 442-456)
Nov 27	No class – Thanksgiving break
Dec 2	Critique of Animal Rights (Roger Scruton, in Sommers, 469-473)
Dec 4	Conclusion and Post-assessment [Second Reflection Paper due]
Dec 11	FINAL EXAM, 10:00-Noon (Note change in time!)

Syllabus Acknowledgement

PHIL 2201-002, Fall 2014

I hereby acknowledge that I have received a copy of the syllabus for this course, and I understand that it is my obligation as a student to read it, familiarize myself with its contents, and inquire in a timely way about any points on which I have questions.

I acknowledge, in particular, that it is my responsibility to be aware of the timeline of course activities (reading assignments, exam dates, paper deadlines, etc.) and am aware that nonperformance or tardy performance will affect my final course grade adversely.

I acknowledge also that failure to comply with course and university policies and requirements regarding academic integrity will expose me to serious academic sanctions.

Finally, I acknowledge that the instructor and the institution reserve the right to make reasonable changes during the semester, as circumstances warrant.

Student's name (printed): _____

Student's signature: _____

Date: _____