

Date updated: 1/13/2025

Syllabus
The University of New Orleans
Dept. of Philosophy

PHIL 2201: Ethics (3 credits)

SECTIONS P002: LA 372, M/W, 12:30 - 1:45 pm

Contact Information

Instructor: Sara Bizarro
Office: LA 170
Office Hours: MT 3-5 pm – [By appointment on Calendly](#).
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Required Texts

Required: Schur, Michael, *How to Be Perfect*, Simon & Schuster, 2022 / ISBN-10 : 1982159324 / ISBN-13:978-1982159320
Recommended: Cahn, Steven M. Cahn, *Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology*, 5th Edition, Oxford University Press / ISBN-10:0190887907 / ISBN-13: 978-0190887902
TV Show: *The Good Place*, available on Netflix.

Course Description

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

COURSE OVERVIEW: Ethics is the study of human action, of what makes certain ways of acting good or bad. How should we live our lives? How should we act? Can we act in ways that are better? What counts as better? In the complex contemporary world we live in it seems like everything we do has a potential ethical component to it. If you are reading this in a computer, was this computer created with child labor? Was the milk you had this morning produced in factory farms? Was the white lie you told your parents bad? Or is it acceptable to lie? Is deceiving ever permissible? If I am driving a trolley, and the breaks have failed and there are five workers on the track ahead of me, should I turn to another track that only has one worker? If I do turn to the one, is this permissible? Why exactly? And did I *choose* to turn the trolley, or was that determined and inevitable? Do we have Free Will? Ethics is hard, but in this class, you will learn how philosophers have tried to answer these and other questions. It won't give you a ready-made solution to all ethical problems, but it will help you think about them in a more complex, nuanced and interesting way.

Student Learning Outcomes

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

- recognize ethical questions and theories.
- distinguish between the main different existing theories.
- read primary and secondary ethics texts.
- explain what ethical theories are and how they can be applied to propose solutions to ethical problems.
- explain the difference between virtue ethics, natural law theory, divine command theory, Kantian ethics and utilitarianism.
- propose solutions to ethical dilemmas using the theories learned in class.
- formulate objections to solutions provided by different theories and express them fairly and clearly.
- construct your both oral and written arguments with respect to the philosophical issues raised in this course using the primary sources.
- present your arguments in a clear and complete way both in writing and orally to the class in a final paper and presentation.

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

Requirement		Final grade	
Reading Annotations	30%	A	100 – 90 points
Class Participation	20%	B	89 – 80 points
Quizzes	10%	C	79 – 70 points
Mid-Term	20%	D	69 – 60 points
Final Exam	20%	F	59 – 0 points
Total	100		

READING ANNOTATIONS: Students will be expected to keep up on the weekly reading assignments, to have read the material prior to the second class of each week, since this is the discussion class. Readings need to be annotated on Perusall.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: The grade for class participation consists in a combined analysis of both your attendance and your oral participation in class discussions. Attendance is taken in every class, on the second class of each week the readings are discussed in detail and there is ample time and opportunity to participate. Different strategies are used to encourage everyone to participate. There are always students who are more vocal and participate more, which is great, but all student views are important, so I would like to hear from everyone in class. For students who are less prone to participate, I would suggest you bring a note from the reading ready to share with the class, you can just read your note out loud if that is easier for you, this is not required, as some students participate regardless, but if you have trouble speaking in public, this is a possible strategy. In philosophy, there are different theories and there are disagreements. When proposing an ethical idea please be as clear and complete as possible regarding the reasons you hold for your views. When disagreeing with someone else's idea, but as clear and complete as possible regarding the reasons you hold and where you agree and disagree. Discussion and opposing viewpoints are encouraged, in a respectful and reasons-based way always. No personal attacks or derogatory remarks are allowed.

QUIZZES: There will be 4 quizzes. Quizzes will be done online and are open-book. Students will have 5 days to do the quizzes once they open and will do it on their own computer or at a computer lab. The purpose of the quizzes is to make sure that students are following along with the class. Quizzes will have 10 questions (true/false, multiple choice, etc) and students will have 20 minutes to complete the quiz. Quizzes will need to be completed in one sitting.

MID-TERM AND FINAL EXAMS: The mid-term and final exams are mandatory and to be done in class. The Mid-Term exam will be presented after all the theories are presented and will be multiple choice/true false/fill in the blank, etc. It can be done either on a computer with a Lockdown browser or on paper. The final exam will be an essay exam and it will consist of you addressing a topic present in the show *The Good Place*, and how three of the main theories learned apply to this topic. The final exam can be taken on a computer in class with a Lockdown browser, or on paper in class.

ATTENDANCE: Attendance of 50% or more of the classes is required to pass. If you don't attend more than 50% of the class you will fail independently of other work you do. This class is highly interactive and I need you in the classroom to properly teach you.

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 accommodation. For more information, please go to <http://www.ods.uno.edu>.

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES: Both the Library and Learning Resource Center are available to assist all students regarding writing and research.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Academic integrity is fundamental to the process of learning and to 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 UNO Judicial Code for further information. The Code is available online: http://www.uno.edu/~stlf/Policy%20Manual/judicial_code_pt2.htm

AI USE: Any and all AI use needs to be explicitly acknowledged and detailed in a note on your paper at the end. AI can be used to research and brainstorm, but it is NOT acceptable to submit anything written by AI, that is **you** need to write all your written submissions yourself, both in your reading annotations and in your final paper. Please note that Perusall warns me of any comment that is copy/pasted so you need to type or dictate directly on the program. Please check your work with Chat GPT Zero if you want to make sure your text is not showing up as AI-created. Anything that shows up as AI-created will need to be re-written and an oral presentation of the topic in my office will be required. You can check Chat GPT Zero here: <https://gptzero.me/>

COMPUTERS/PHONES/IPADS: You may use a computer or tablet with to take notes or access the readings. But you may NOT go online during class, you cannot check email, Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, etc. Using your devices in this way is distracting both to you and your colleagues. Class time is to be used for learning and discussion only.

INCOMPLETES: Incompletes are STRONGLY discouraged. Should you need to take an incomplete, arrangements must be made with me well before the last class meeting.

WITHDRAWALS: You may withdraw from this course for any reason. Withdrawal is strictly up to you, you do not need to explain it to me. Look in the course listings for the last day to withdraw without a penalty — a 'W' appearing on your transcript.

Course Program – General

Subject to revision

**Please note that a complete program with detailed readings will be posted when classes start/*

DAY	TOPIC/READING/VIDEO
Week 1	<i>Meet and greet</i>
Week 2 & 3	<i>The Trolley Problem</i> Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schur, Michael, <i>How to Be Perfect</i>, Chapter 2 “Should I Let This Runaway Trolley I’m Driving Kill Five people, or Should I Pull a Lever and Deliberately Kill One (Different) Person?” • Foot, Philippa, “The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect”, <i>Oxford Review</i>, 1967 • Thomson, Judith Jarvis, “The Trolley Problem” and “Turning the Trolley” in Cahn, Steven, <i>Exploring Ethics, An Introductory Anthology</i>, 2020
Week 4	<i>What is Ethics?</i> Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schur, Michael, <i>How to Be Perfect</i>, “Introduction” • Nagel, Thomas, “Right and Wrong”, ed Cahn, Steven, <i>Exploring Ethics, An Introductory Anthology</i>, 2020 Quiz 1 – The Trolley Problem & What is Ethics?
Weeks 5 & 6	<i>Virtue Ethics</i> Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aristotle, “The Nature of Virtue” from <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i>, in Cahn, Steven, <i>Exploring Ethics, An Introductory Anthology</i>, 2020 • Driver, Julia, “Virtue Ethics” Cahn, Steven, <i>Exploring Ethics, An Introductory Anthology</i>, 2020 • Schur, Michael, <i>How to Be Perfect</i>, Chapter 1, “Should I Punch My Friend in the Face for No Reason?” Quiz 2 – Virtue Ethics
Weeks 7 & 8	<i>Natural Law Theory / Ethics and Religion</i> Readings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aquinas, Thomas, “Natural Law”, <i>Summa Theologica</i>. • Cahn, Steven, “God and Morality”, <i>Exploring Ethics, An Introductory Anthology</i>, 2020

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> <p>Quiz 3 – Natural Law Theory, Ethics and Religion</p>
Weeks 9	<p><i>Kantian Ethics</i> Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kant, Immanuel, “The Categorical Imperative”, <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>, Cahn, Steven, <i>Exploring Ethics, An Introductory Anthology</i>. Schur, Michael, <i>How to Be Perfect</i>, Chapter 3, “Should I Lie and Tell My Friend I Like Her Ugly Shirt?”
Weeks 10	<p><i>Utilitarianism</i> Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schur, Michael, <i>How to Be Perfect</i>, “Utilitarianism – A Results-Oriented Business!” Mill, John Stuart, “Utilitarianism”, Cahn, Steven, <i>Exploring Ethics, An Introductory Anthology</i>. <p>Quiz 4 – Kantian Ethics, Utilitarianism</p>
Weeks 11	<p><i>Contractualism</i> Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schur, Michael, <i>How to Be Perfect</i>, Chapter 4 “Do I Have to Return My Shopping Cart to the Shopping Cart Rack Thingy? I Mean... It’s All the Way Over There.” Scanlon, T.M., <i>What We Owe to Each Other</i>, Chapter 5, “The Structure of Contractualism”, 1998
Week 12	<p><i>Care Ethics and Ubuntu</i> Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Held, Virginia, “The Ethics of Care,” Cahn, Steven, <i>Exploring Ethics, An Introductory Anthology</i>. Schur, Michael, <i>How to Be Perfect</i>, “I Am, Because We Are.” <p>Quiz 5 – Contractualism, Care Ethics, Ubuntu</p>
Week 13	<p>Exam 1</p>

Week 14	<p><i>Moral Saints</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schur, Michael, <i>How to Be Perfect</i>, “Moral Perfection: A Cautionary Tale” • Wolf, Susan, “Moral Saints:”, <i>The Journal of Philosophy</i>, 1982 <p><i>Moral Luck</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nagel, Thomas, “Moral Luck,” <i>Mortal Questions</i>, 1979 • Wolf, Susan, “The Moral of Moral Luck”, 2001
Week 15	<p><i>Free Will</i></p> <p>Readings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nagel, Thomas, “Free Will,” <i>What Does it All Mean?</i> 1987 <p>Quiz 6 – Moral Saints, Moral Luck, Free Will</p>
Exam Week	Final Exam