

PHIL 115: Introduction to Ethics

Emory University – Revised 2020

Instructor's Name:

Catherine Fullarton

Class Meeting Time & Place:

T/Th/F – 8-8:50am; Rich Building 103

Office Hours:

Tuesday 9-11am, or by appointment; Bowden Hall 109

Office Location:

Bowden Hall 109

Contact Information:

cfullar@emory.edu or (678) 200-4602

Course Description:

What does it mean to be a good person? What is the relationship between morality and happiness, pleasure, or justice? Do we have a moral obligation to oppose injustice? If so, on what grounds?

The goal of this course is to introduce you to core questions in the history of moral philosophy, and ways in which they have been addressed. Our goal will be to develop a nuanced understanding of the texts we study through close-reading, exegetical writing, and thoughtful attention to philosophical methods of argumentation. Excelling in this course will require careful reading, thoughtful preparation, active engagement, and a commitment to fruitful and respectful exchange with others. This is reflected in the evaluation structure, which asks you to consider the material ahead of class time, and to come to class prepared with questions for us to consider together.

This course is open to all students at all levels and in all fields of study. No background in or familiarity with philosophy is expected or required.

Please note: This is a 4-credit hour course. Each week, we'll meet for three hours of lecture/class time. The additional hour will be fulfilled in a different form, each week, as noted in the syllabus. Weekly “deliverables” and other evaluations will consider this additional material.

Required Texts:

The following course texts are required. I encourage you to consult local independent bookstores (like Eagle Eye Bookstore and Charon Books), as many should be readily available in used condition. They may also be available free of charge through Emory's library system. If acquiring course texts constitutes a financial hardship, please speak with me; alternate arrangements may be possible.

- Sophocles, *Antigone*, Trans. David Mulroy, Wisconsin Studies Classics [ISBN: 9780299290832]
- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Trans. Bartlett & Collins, U. Chicago [ISBN: 9780226026756]
- Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, Translated by James Ellington, Hackett Publishing [ISBN: 9780872201668]
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, 2nd Ed., Hackett Publishing (2002) [ISBN: 9780872206052]
- Virginia Held, *The Ethics of Care*, Oxford University Press (2005) [ISBN: 9780195180992]
- Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Yale University Press [ISBN: 9780300115468]
- Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, Open Road Media [ISBN: 9781480442801]

Other readings will be made available on Canvas, as noted in the syllabus.

Evaluations:

Reading Responses (6% each x 5 submissions) – due every other Monday by 9pm 30%

Every other week for the first ten weeks, students will be required to submit a short (1-2 page) assignment addressing & reflecting upon the key ideas of the readings for the upcoming week. These assignments have been developed to enable you to build and practice the skills you'll need to succeed in the course and on the final paper. Prompts will be provided on Canvas.

Peer-Foodback (2% each x 5 submissions) – due every other Thursday by 9pm 10%

Each week, students will be required to respond to a peer's Reading Response by posing questions and offering feedback to help further the work. More details will be provided in-class. The grade for this portion will consider the fruitfulness and constructiveness of the feedback provided.

Mid-Semester Paper – due Saturday November 2nd by 9pm 20%

Mid-semester, you will write & submit a mid-length paper (3-4 pages) defending your own reading of one of the course texts. No further research is expected or required. This paper must engage with at least one of the course texts in a substantial way. Further details will be provided in class.

Final Assignment 30%

For the final assignment, you have three options: you may (1) revise and expand your mid-semester paper; or (2) write a new paper; or (3) take an oral exam considering all of the course material and asking you to reflect on it in a thoughtful and critical way. Further instructions and more specific requirements will be provided in class, closer to the deadline.

Final papers will be due Friday Dec. 13th at 9pm. Oral exams will take place Dec. 10th-13th.

Attendance & Engagement 10%

This grade considers attendance and meaningful contributions to in-class discussions. To get the full grade, your peers must be able to count on you as a reliable interlocutor who will listen thoughtfully, and enhance their understanding of the material under discussion.

Full attendance is expected. Students are expected to attend every class, fully prepared, and having read and reflected on the material ahead of time. Attendance is taken at the start of class, which means that lateness may be counted as an absence. Please see the "Attendance" section under "Important Policies" for more.

Grading:

Reading Responses (5 x 6% each)	30%
Peer Feedback (5 x 2% each)	10%
Mid-Semester Paper	20%
Final Assignment	30%
<u>Attendance & Engagement</u>	10%
TOTAL	100%

*These should be considered guidelines rather than fixed values; I reserve the right to adjust for performance improvement (or diminishment of effort) over the course of the term. Students must complete all required assignments in order to complete the course.

A Note on Writing...

In this class, you'll have many opportunities to develop and enhance your writing abilities *and* your critical thinking. You are also *highly* encouraged to make an appointment with the [Emory Writing Center](#) for further assistance with brainstorming, writing, and essay development.

If writing (in general, or in English, specifically) is a particular challenge for you, please don't wait to seek support. Consult the Writing Center and/or come see me during office hours to discuss your specific concerns *before* the first assignment.

Other Important Policies

Attendance & Participation

Students are expected to attend every class, and to engage thoughtfully with each other and with the course ideas. As such, full attendance is expected. After two unexcused absences, students will lose 1% of their final grade for each subsequent absence. Students who miss class for a legitimate academic, athletic or personal reason should visit the Office of Undergraduate Education (OUE) to have the absence documented. Absences without an official note from OUE will be considered unexcused, regardless of the reason.

Examples of acceptable reasons for missing class: documented illness or exceptional personal circumstances. Examples of unacceptable reasons for missing class: extended travel plans, slept in.

Paper Extensions

The goal of this course is to have students engage thoughtfully with difficult philosophical material. As such, students should plan ahead to ensure sufficient time to complete work to the best of their ability. Requests for extensions must be made by email *at least* 48hrs before the assignment deadline and the email must include *both*: (1) the reason for the request, and (2) the proposed new submission deadline. You will receive email confirmation if the request is granted.

Because they involve peer-reviews that are automatically assigned by Canvas, extensions cannot be granted for weekly writing assignments. Late submissions may incur grade deductions up to the full grade value of the work.

Accessibility Information

My goal is to support you, as best I can, in your learning. If particular accommodations would be helpful for you, I encourage you to contact the [Office of Accessibility Services \(OAS\)](#), who will work with you to determine reasonable pedagogical accommodations. Once you've registered with them, please meet with me (during office hours, or by requesting an appointment) to discuss a protocol that will allow you best to meet the course learning goals.

Office of Accessibility Services: (404) 727-9877 or accessibility@emory.edu

Technology Policy

Learning with and from others is central to this course. Accordingly, use of cell phones and personal computers is not permitted in class.

Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with documented need of technology. Please refer to the policies outlined in “Accessibility Information,” above, for more information.

Plagiarism

Plagiarism is a serious academic misconduct that could result in expulsion from the university. If you are *at all* uncertain about or unfamiliar with this term, it is *imperative* that you review Emory’s [Honor Code](#) on this subject. Ignorance of the policy is *not* an excuse for plagiarism.

Emory Honor Code

“Emory’s [Honor Code](#) is in effect throughout the semester. By taking this course, you affirm that it is a violation of the code to cheat on exams, to plagiarize, to deviate from the teacher’s instructions about collaboration on work that is submitted for grades, to give false information to a faculty member, and to undertake any other form of academic misconduct. You agree that the instructor is entitled to move you to another seat during examinations, without explanation. You also affirm that if you witness others violating the code you have a duty to report them to the honor council.” (*Excerpted from Emory’s Office of Undergraduate Education*).

Reading Schedule & Due Dates

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTION

R Aug. 29th	Syllabus & Emory’s Honor Code
F Aug. 30th	Midgley, “Trying Out One’s New Sword” [PDF on Canvas]

WEEK 2: ETHICS IN CONFLICT

T Sept. 3rd	Sophocles, <i>Antigone</i>
R Sept. 5th	Sophocles, <i>Antigone</i>
F Sept. 6th	Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” [PDF on Canvas]
4th Credit Hr	[Film] <i>Force Majeure</i> (2014) *Note: this week’s film fulfills the 4 th credit hour for this week and next.

WEEK 3: ARISTOTELIAN VIRTUE ETHICS

T Sept. 10th	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book I
R Sept. 12th	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book II & III.1-5
F Sept. 13th	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book III.6 – IV.8
4th Credit Hr	[Last week’s film fulfilled this hour]

WEEK 4: ARISTOTELIAN VIRTUE ETHICS II

T Sept. 17th	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book VII
R Sept. 19th	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book VIII & IX
F Sept. 20th	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book X
4th Credit Hr	Marcus Aurelius, <i>Meditations</i> (Selections) [PDF on Canvas]

WEEK 5: KANT, STOICISM

T Sept. 24th	Immanuel Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Part I
R Sept. 26th	Immanuel Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Part II
F Sept. 27th	Immanuel Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> , Part II
4th Credit Hr	Immanuel Kant, “On a Supposed Right to Lie because of Philanthropic Concerns”

WEEK 6: UTILITARIANISM

T Oct. 1st	Jeremy Bentham, <i>The Principles of Morals and Legislation</i> [excerpt on Canvas]
R Oct. 3rd	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> [excerpt on Canvas]
F Oct. 4th	John Stuart Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> [excerpt on Canvas]
4th Credit Hr	Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, Morality” [PDF on Canvas]

WEEK 7: NIETZSCHE

T Oct. 8th	Nietzsche, <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> , Preface & First Essay
R Oct. 10th	Nietzsche, <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> , First Essay
F Oct. 11th	Nietzsche, <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> , First Essay
4th Credit Hr	Nietzsche, <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> , First Essay

WEEK 8: CARE ETHICS

T Oct. 15th	[Fall Break – No Lecture]
R Oct. 17th	Held, <i>The Ethics of Care</i> , Introduction & Chapter 1
F Oct. 18th	Held, <i>The Ethics of Care</i> , Chapter 2 & 3
4th Credit Hr	Held, <i>The Ethics of Care</i> , Chapter 4

WEEK 9: EXISTENTIALISM – SARTRE

T Oct. 22nd	Sartre, <i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i> , pp. 17-39
R Oct. 24th	Sartre, <i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i> , pp. 17-39
F Oct. 25th	Sartre, <i>Existentialism is a Humanism</i> , pp. 39-54
4th Credit Hr	Camus, “The Myth of Sisyphus” (Selections) [PDF on Canvas]

WEEK 10: EXISTENTIALISM – BEAUVOIR I

T Oct. 29th	Beauvoir, <i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , Part II, pp. 37-45
R Oct. 31st	Beauvoir, <i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , Part II, pp. 45-62
F Nov. 1st	Beauvoir, <i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , Part II, pp. 45-62
4th Credit Hr	Watch: <i>A Serious Man</i> (2009, Coen Brothers) *Note: this week's film fulfills the 4 th credit hour for this week and next.

WEEK 11: EXISTENTIALISM – BEAUVOIR II

T Nov. 5th	Beauvoir, <i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , Part II, pp. 62-79
R Nov. 7th	Beauvoir, <i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , Part III, pp. 79-103

F Nov. 8th	Beauvoir, <i>The Ethics of Ambiguity</i> , Part III, pp.79-103
4th Credit Hr	[Last week's film fulfilled this hour]

WEEK 12: EXISTENTIALISM – FANON

T Nov. 12th	Fanon, “On Violence” [PDF on Canvas]
R Nov. 15th	Fanon, “On Violence” [PDF on Canvas]
F Nov. 16th	Fanon, “On Violence” [PDF on Canvas]
4th Credit Hr	Gloria Anzaldúa, “How to Tame a Wild Tongue” [PDF on Canvas]

WEEK 13: CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES I

T Nov. 19th	Lennard J. Davis, “Constructing Normalcy” [PDF on Canvas]
R Nov. 20th	Lennard J. Davis, “Constructing Normalcy” [PDF on Canvas]
F Nov. 21st	Lennard J. Davis, “Constructing Normalcy” [PDF on Canvas]
4th Credit Hr	Lennard J. Davis, “Constructing Normalcy” [PDF on Canvas]

WEEK 14: CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES II

T Nov. 26th	Judith Butler, “Can One Lead a Good Life in a Bad Life?” [PDF on Canvas] + Re-read Martin Luther King Jr., “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” [PDF on Canvas]
R Nov. 28th	[Thanksgiving – No Lecture]
F Nov. 29th	[Thanksgiving – No Lecture]

WEEK 15: CONTEMPORARY MORAL ISSUES III

T Dec. 2nd	Donna Haraway, Introduction, <i>Staying with the Trouble</i> [PDF on Canvas]
R Dec. 5th	Donna Haraway, Chapter 1, <i>Staying with the Trouble</i> [PDF on Canvas]
F Dec. 6th	Donna Haraway, Chapter 1, <i>Staying with the Trouble</i> [PDF on Canvas]
4th Credit Hr	[No Readings – Course Conclusion & Workshop for Final Paper / Oral Exam Prep]

WEEK 16: COURSE CONCLUSION

T Dec. 10th	[No Readings – Course Conclusion & Workshop for Final Paper / Oral Exam Prep]
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Final Disclaimer:

This syllabus should be considered provisional. The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus at any time, as the course progresses. Such changes will be reflected in the version of the syllabus available through Canvas.

Grading Scale:

93.0 - 100.0	A	87.0 - 89.9	B+	77.0 - 79.9	C+	67.0 - 69.9	D+
90.0 - 92.9	A-	83.0 - 86.9	B	73.0 - 76.9	C	60.0 - 66.9	D
		80.0 - 82.9	B-	70.0 - 72.9	C-	Below 60.0	F