

**PHL2030: Intro to Ethics**  
**T/R 8:30-9:45am via Zoom**  
**Link available on Canvas**  
**password: ethics2030**

**Instructor:** Kelley Annesley

Email: [kannesley@unomaha.edu](mailto:kannesley@unomaha.edu) / [kmannesley@gmail.com](mailto:kmannesley@gmail.com)

Office hours: Mondays 12:30-2:30pm CST, and by appointment (Zoom link available via Canvas)

**Textbook:**

Shafer-Landau, Russ. *The Fundamentals of Ethics*. Oxford University Press, 2020. 5th Edition. (Abbreviated FoE in course schedule.)

Additional readings will be provided via Canvas.

**Attendance and participation:**

- Attendance and participation are key components of this small, discussion-based course. Significant absences and/or lack of participation will impede your ability to engage with the content of the course. Absences will of course be excused in case of illness or emergency. If you need to miss class on any particular day, please inform me as soon as possible.
- Participation in this course is not measured merely by the amount of time spent speaking in class or the number of classes during which you speak; active listening, preparation for class, and participating in discussions are all required for full marks in the participation and attendance category. If you have any concerns about participating adequately in class, please feel free to contact me.
- It is expected that you will attend synchronous class meetings regularly. To ensure participation and a quality discussion, it is also expected that you keep your video on throughout class. Please feel free to use a virtual background.
  - o If you have concerns about keeping video on in general, please get in touch with me to discuss extenuating circumstances.
  - o If there is a day where you expect that you cannot turn on your video (ie. because of poor internet connection), please send me an email before class or send a message in the Zoom chat noting that you will keep your video off, and why. If you cannot utilize your video, please use the “raise hand” function on Zoom (and if you must, the text chat) in order to participate.
  - o If you miss more than 5 classes (without communication with me about those absences/approved excuses), you will receive a 0 for attendance and participation and will face a penalty to your overall grade in the course proportionate to the number of classes above 5 that you miss.

**Informal assignments:**

The purpose of informal assignments is to give you practice writing concisely in a philosophical style, and to help you to gather your thoughts prior to class to help facilitate class discussion. They are graded on a complete/incomplete basis—if you make a *good faith effort* on the assignment and turn it in via Canvas before the deadline, you will receive full credit.

**Quizzes:**

Quizzes will be given at the instructor’s discretion, **without prior notice**, and will be completed in-class. In course, quizzes will focus on your comprehension of the assigned

readings and key concepts. Quizzes will be timed and quite short, and therefore closed note/closed textbook (there simply will not be time for you to consult your notes or textbook).

**Respect:**

As can often happen in philosophy courses, I expect that we will discuss issues on which we disagree, and will have strong opinions about those disagreements. It is absolutely crucial that our disagreements are respectful. Respectful engagement with our peers includes actively listening, refraining from distracting behaviors in class, taking others seriously, and respecting each others' time.

**Inclusivity:**

Please know that this classroom respects and welcomes students of all backgrounds and abilities, and that I invite you to talk with me about any concern or situation that affects your ability to complete your academic work successfully.

**Late work:**

Late informal assignments and late quizzes/exams will not be accepted in cases of emergency or otherwise unavoidable absences (which I recognize can come up unexpectedly, especially given our current circumstances). If this applies, you must contact me in order to have the late penalty waived, and to make up the work missed in class.

For writing assignments, each day the assignment is late results in a 1/3 grade penalty. (For example, if the paper earned an A, but is turned in after the deadline, but on the day of the deadline, it will earn an A-. If the paper is two days late, it will earn a B+... etc.) If you suspect that you cannot turn in an assignment by the deadline, it is crucial that you reach out to me ahead of time to arrange an extension. Except in cases of true emergencies, it is unlikely that late penalties for work turned in after the deadline will be waived without a previously arranged extension.

**Instructor Communication:**

I welcome it! Please feel free to get in touch with me via email any time. I aim to respond to all emails within 24 hours, Monday-Friday. If I do not respond to your email in this window, feel free to email me again. I will also sometimes respond to email over the weekend, but do not guarantee a response on Saturdays or Sundays. In return, I also expect prompt responses to any emails I send to you!

**Note:** I do not guarantee a response to emails regarding assignments or exams within 24 hours of the due date or exam date. For example, our first paper is due at class time on March 11. I will therefore not respond to emails with questions about the paper sent after March 10 at 8:30am.

**\*\* I also welcome talking about feedback and grades, but I will address questions on feedback and grades only once you have read through the feedback thoroughly and once 24 hours have passed since you received the feedback or grade.**

- I am also happy to give feedback on drafts of writing projects, but this feedback will only be given via an office hours Zoom meeting (during my regular office hours or during a meeting made by appointment). I cannot give written comments on drafts, though I am happy to talk through any questions you have at any point of the writing process.

**Academic Honesty:**

Any form of academic dishonesty is unacceptable in this course; it will not be tolerated. This includes (but is not limited to) plagiarizing by failure to include proper citations on a written work, collaborating on exams/assignments when this is not explicitly allowed, and acquiring pre-written essays. To ensure that you know what exactly will be counted as academic dishonesty, please see the UNO academic integrity policy:

<https://catalog.unomaha.edu/undergraduate/academic-integrity/>

Incidents of plagiarism and/or academic cheating in this course will result in a mandatory meeting with me and an automatic F on the assignment, quiz or exam in question, in addition to going through the process outlined in the above UNO academic integrity policy.

**Note:** Every assignment you submit in this course is subject to processing through Turn It In via Canvas. Turn It In is an automated service that detects plagiarism.

**Electronic Devices:**

Since our course is online, we will of course be relying heavily on electronic devices.

Given that, devices must be used properly in class. You have a good sense already about what counts as proper use in class; any use of electronics that distracts you from participating in class is likely improper use. Because this class is small, your improper use of electronic devices is not only disrespectful, but will distract your classmates as well. Additionally, improper use of electronics during class **will result in a significant deduction of your participation/attendance grade.**

**UNO Writing Center:**

I encourage you to utilize the resources of the writing center to receive help on your writing projects! For more on the services of the writing center, please see the following link: <https://www.unomaha.edu/college-of-arts-and-sciences/writing-center/index.php>

**Grading scheme:**

**Participation and attendance: 10%**

**Informal assignments and quizzes: 10%**

**Exam 1: 5%**

**Exam 2: 15%**

**Exam 3: 25% (final exam)**

**Paper 1: 10%**

**Paper 2: 25%**

## Course Schedule

**\*\*\*Note: The course schedule is tentative, and is subject to change. When it is updated, I will send out an updated schedule via email and provide an updated schedule on Canvas. Once the syllabus changes are sent out, it is your responsibility to follow the new syllabus.**

Tuesday, January 12: Intro to course, syllabus discussion

**Homework:** First day survey

Thursday, January 14: Argument and argument forms, start discussion of value and well-being

**Reading due:**

- "Introduction," FoE
- "Faring Well and Getting What You Want," Heathwood (Available via Canvas)

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 1: What are the characteristics of a good philosophical argument? Can we make arguments about moral claims? Why or why not?

Tuesday, January 19: Well-being and Experience Machines

**Reading due:** - Nozick "The Experience Machine"

- Susan Wolf, "Happiness and Meaning: Two Aspects of the Good Life."

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 2: Would you plug into the Experience Machine? Why or why not?

Thursday, January 21: Ethical egoism

**Reading due:** Chapter 8: "Ethical Egoism," FoE

Tuesday, January 26: Relativisms

**Reading due:** - Chapter 19, "Ethical Relativism," FoE

- Enoch, "Why I am an Objectivist about Ethics and You Are, Too."

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 3: What do you think is the most compelling argument for relativism, and what is the best response to it?

Thursday, January 28: Error Theories and Nihilism

**Reading due:** - Chapter 20, "Moral Nihilism"

- Hume "Moral Distinctions not Derived From Reason"

February 2: Religious Ethics and Divine Command Theory

**Reading due:** - Chapter 5, "Morality and Religion," FoE

- Plato, "Euthyphro"

February 4: **Exam 1**, philosophical writing workshop

February 9: Consequentialism

**Reading due:** - "Utilitarianism," Mill

- Chapter 9, "Consequentialism: Its Nature and Attractions," FoE

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 4: Summarize the main idea of consequentialism and identify one reason why we might think consequentialism is the correct normative theory.

February 11: Consequentialism II

**Reading due:** - "The Singer Solution to World Poverty," Singer  
- Chapter 10, "Consequentialism: Its Difficulties"

February 16: Kant

**Reading due:** - Chapter 11, "The Kantian Perspective: Fairness and Justice," FoE  
- Kant, "The Good Will and the Categorical Imperative"

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 5: What is the principle of universalizability?

February 18: Kant con't.

**Reading due:** Chapter 12, "The Kantian Perspective: Autonomy, Free Will and Respect," FoE

February 23: Naturalism, virtue ethics

**Reading due:** Chapter 6, "Natural Law," FoE.

February 25: Virtue Ethics

**Reading due:** Chapter 17, "Virtue Ethics," FoE.

- Aristotle, "Nichomachean Ethics."

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 6: What is the main idea of a virtue ethical theory? How could we use a virtue ethical perspective to guide our moral decision making?

March 2: The Trolley Problem, the doing-allowing distinction

**Homework due: *Paper 1***

**Reading due:** Thomson, "Killing and Letting Die and the Trolley Problem."

March 4: Trolley Problems con't: Doctrine of Double Effect and positive/negative rights

**Reading due:** "Ethical Pluralism and Absolute Moral Rules," FoE Chapter 15

March 9: Ross and Prima Facie Duties

**Reading due:** "Ethical Pluralism: Prima Facie Duties and Ethical Particularism," FoE  
Chapter 16

- Further reading TBD

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 7: What's one advantage of a Rossian account/an account that posits prima facie duties rather than more absolute moral rules (like a Kantian theory)?

March 11: **Exam 1**

March 16: **No class, spring break**

March 18: **No class, spring break**

March 23: Social Contract Theories

**Reading due:** Chapters 13 and 14, FoE

- Informal assignment 8: How do proceduralist theories tell us to approach moral theorizing?

March 25: Feminist ethics

**Reading due:** "What is Feminist Ethics?" Lindemann

- "Feminist Ethics," FoE Chapter 18\*

March 30: Feminist ethics II

**Reading due:** - Sherwin, "Feminist and Medical Ethics"

- Further reading TBD

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 9: How can a feminist philosophical perspective help us to do better theorizing in ethics? What about in particular areas of ethics like biomedical ethics?

April 1: Difficult duties I: the non-identity problem

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 10: Can we have duties to individual people? What about groups of people? What about non-specific people (eg. could it turn out you have a duty to someone, but have no way of knowing who that someone is)?

April 6: Difficult duties II: moral obligations and climate change

**Reading due:** "It's not My Fault: Global Warming and Individual Moral Obligations," Sinnott-Armstrong

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 11: Do you have a duty to amend your behavior to decrease carbon emissions? Why or why not?

April 8: Conflicts of autonomy: Antinatalism & IVF/PGD

**Reading due:**

- "Implications of Prenatal Diagnosis for the Human Right to Life," Leon Kass
- "Genetics and Reproductive Risk: Can Having Children be Immoral?" Laura Purdy

April 13: Content catch up/ writing workshop II

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment 12: What's one area of your argument and/or philosophical writing that you are aiming to improve on in paper 2?

April 15: Race and racial justice

**Reading due:** TBD

**Homework due:** Paper 2

April 20: Content TBD (in accordance with student interest)

April 22: Content TBD (in accordance with student interest)

April 27: Moral knowledge, skepticism, and disagreement

**Reading due:** - Appiah, "What will future generations condemn us for?"

- Chapter 22, "Is Moral Knowledge Possible?" FoE

April 29: **Last day of class**

**Homework due:**

- Informal assignment X: Exam review prep assignment, prompt will be made available 4/22

**Final exam: Tuesday, May 4**

Possible content for TBD classes:

- Moral issues surrounding gender and race
- Other normative theories mentioned briefly earlier in the course/in the Shafer-Landau text like particularism
- Student suggestions!