

PHI 101: Introduction to Ethics in Society

University of Wisconsin Stevens Point at Wausau, Spring 2021

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Office Hours: M/W 7-8 PM (and by appointment)



Course Description

We will start this course by briefly exploring some basic elements of moral philosophy. This introduction will provide us with the theoretical tools and vocabulary to explore moral arguments related to a number of vexing moral issues facing modern society, such as: abortion, sexual ethics, just war theory, torture and terrorism, hunger, environmental ethics and food ethics.

How This Semester Will Function

Given that this is an online class that will be run asynchronously, you will be able to complete this class somewhat on your own schedule. We will have live Zoom meetings on Thursdays (and Tuesdays, when we have exams on Thursday), but they will be optional. During the live meetings we will discuss the material, address questions, and do many of the things which make in-person classes successful.

I have found that a consistent and clear schedule fosters student success in online courses, so I've developed this schedule with that in mind. The readings are typically assigned on Mondays and Tuesdays, but the only graded portion for a typical week is a quiz on Friday. In a normal semester, I would have the readings spread out a bit more during the week, but I am allowing students to do this on their own this semester. I've reserved most Thursdays for a live discussion, but you need not complete all of the readings to attend. The readings should simply be finished each week by Friday, in order to take the quiz.

Essential Questions

- What theoretical principles guide our moral behavior?
- What makes an action right or wrong?
- What factors (theoretical and practical) ground moral disputes?

Enduring Understandings

You will come to understand that:

- Moral disputes often (but not always) reflect theoretical differences.
- One's moral beliefs should be grounded in reason as well as value.
- Moral problems are often more complex than they first appear.

Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions

You should be able to:

- Identify and evaluate moral arguments.
- Apply critical thinking skills to other professional and personal pursuits.
- Understand a variety of philosophical concepts, questions, and positions.
- Defend your own philosophical positions against criticisms.
- Read and comprehend challenging philosophical works.
- Appreciate and respect differing points of views.

Required Texts:

- Mark Timmons, *Disputed Moral Issues*, Third Edition. Oxford University Press.
- All readings will also be posted on Canvas.

Office Hours: I will have office hours scheduled for Monday and Wednesday evenings from 7-8pm. This time is set aside for student meetings, but if you plan to meet with me, you will have to schedule it with me. I realize that this time will not work for some students, and I can meet at other various times throughout the week, just contact me to set up a time that works. You can find the link to the office hours meeting room in the course information module.

Graded assignments will include:

1. Three Exams (20% each – 60% total)
2. Three Essays (10% each – 30% total)
3. Ten Quizzes/ Short Assignments (10% total)

Quizzes: Quizzes will cover the readings for that week. They will be due by the end of the day on Friday. Typically, quizzes will be around five questions and five minutes in length, though I reserve the right to occasionally change the quiz format. No notes, readings, or outside sources are allowed on quizzes.

Short Essays: Short essays will be 500-750 word in length and summarize a reading or responding to a particular question. Essay prompts will be provided. Essays will be checked for “originality” via “Turnitin.com.” Details and suggestions on writing essays, as well as grading criteria, will be distributed in class.

Exams: There will be three exams. Exams will consist of multiple-choice, true/false, and short essays. Exams will not be cumulative. The dates for the exams are listed in our schedule. You may take the exam anytime during the day it is assigned – you do not need to take it during our scheduled class time. No notes, readings, or outside sources are allowed on exams.

Final grades will be determined on the following scale:

100-93	A	<87-83	B	<77-73	C	<67-63	D
<93-90	A-	<83-80	B-	<73-70	C-	<63-60	D-
<90-87	B+	<80-77	C+	<70-67	D+	<60	F

Late Policy: Quizzes cannot be made-up. Papers will be docked 10% per class late. Exams cannot be made-up without a university approved absence notification (e.g. a note from a health care provider explaining why the student couldn't be there). Furthermore, you need to contact me immediately in order to reschedule the exam as early as possible. If this condition is not met, you may not be able to re-take the exam.

Academic Honesty: If you commit any acts of academic dishonesty (such as plagiarism on written work or cheating on an exam) you will earn a zero for that work (and possibly other disciplinary actions). Please refer to the Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures for more information

(<http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/SRR-2010/rightsChap14.pdf>)

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Statement: The ADA is a federal law requiring educational institutions to provide reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities. For more information about UWSP's policies, see: <http://www.uwsp.edu/stuaffairs/Documents/RightsRespons/ADA/rightsADAPolicyInfo.pdf>.

If you require *classroom and/or exam accommodations*, please register with the **Disability and Assistive Technology Center** and then contact me at the beginning of the course. For more information, please visit the Disability Center's office, located at 604 LRC or their webpage at: <http://www.uwsp.edu/disability/Pages/default.aspx>.

Schedule: Please note that the schedule is subject to change. Readings are either located in our text (DMI) or on our Canvas site.

M Jan 25	Introduction and Syllabus
W Jan 27	Ethics in the Pandemic
M Feb 1	Introduction to Ethics A Moral Theory Primer (DMI 2-35)
W Feb 3	Continued
M Feb 8	Jeremy Bentham, The Principle of Utility (DMI 38-43)
W Feb 10	Immanuel Kant, The Moral Law (DMI 47-55)
M Feb 15	Abortion Judith Jarvis Thompson, A Defense of Abortion (DMI 431-438)
W Feb 17	Don Marquis, Why Abortion Is Immoral (DMI 468-473)
M Feb 22	Sexual Ethics Paul VI, Vatican Declarations on Some Questions of Sexual Ethics (DMI 89-95)
W Feb 24	John Corvino, Why Shouldn't Tommy and Jim Have Sex? (DMI 95-101) and Exam Review
M Mar 1	EXAM 1
W Mar 3	Ethics of War and Terrorism Chap 13 Introduction (DMI 564-571)
M Mar 8	Michael Walzer, Terrorism: A Critique of Excuses (DMI 598-606)
W Mar 10	Andrew Valls, Can Terrorism Be Justified? (DMI 606-617)
M Mar 15	Alan Dershowitz, Should the Ticking Time Bomb Terrorist Be Tortured? (DMI 617-628)
W Mar 17	Marcia Baron, The Ticking Time Bomb Hypothetical (DMI 628-641)
M Mar 22-26	Spring Break
M Mar 29	Environmental Ethics Film: Fierce Green Fire
W Mar 31	Leopold, The Land Ethic
M Apr 5	Taylor, Ethics of Respect for Nature
W Apr 7	Sober, Problems with Environmental Ethics & Exam Review
M Apr 12	EXAM 2
W Apr 14	World Hunger Garrett Hardin, Lifeboat Ethics (DMI 645-651)
M Apr 19	Sen, Population: Delusion and Reality
W Apr 21	Peter Singer, The Life You Can Save (DMI 651-665)
M Apr 26	Animal Ethics Gaverick Matheny, Utilitarianism and Animals (DMI 383-392)
W Apr 28	Roger Scruton, The Conscientious Carnivore
M May 3	Budolfson, The Inefficiency Objection
W May 5	Driver, Individual Consumption and Moral Complicity
M May 10	Food Ethics Movie: <i>Food Inc.</i>
W May 12	Rachel Laudan, A Plea For Culinary Modernism and Review

Exam 3: Monday, May 17th