

**PHIL 103.20**

## **INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS**

TOWSON UNIVERSITY

SPRING 2018

TU/TH 2:00-3:15, HH0408

### **INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION**

ALEXANDER ENGLERT

[AENGLERT@TOWSON.EDU](mailto:AENGLERT@TOWSON.EDU)/[AENGLER1@JHU.EDU](mailto:AENGLER1@JHU.EDU)

OFFICE HOURS: TBA

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

CATALOG DESCRIPTION: Introduction to the history and theory of ethics. GenEd II.C.1 or Core 14: Ethical Issues and Perspectives.

COURSE OBJECTIVES: We will be exploring both historical and modern texts dealing with fundamental questions in ethics: What is the good life? Are there certain things that I and everyone else should do because it is a duty? Why be good at all if not everyone will be? We will explore various ways of answering these questions along with possible objections. At the end, we will take a brief dive in some applied ethical issues. Our objective is not to find *the* answer, but rather explore various answers, appreciate the complexities of these issues, as well as come to a better grasp of what we ourselves think and *why*.

COURSE OUTCOMES: Students by the end of the course should have a basic grasp of the key questions and arguments in ethics. They will have also practiced in the course of the semester close reading as well as honed their argumentative skills (both in dialogue and writing). If one takes the course seriously, one can hope to come to deeper understanding about one's own convictions as well as points of ambiguity of which one was previously unaware.

### **REQUIRED TEXTS**

1) *The Fundamentals of Ethics, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*, by Russ Shafer-Landau (Oxford University Press, 2018).

2) *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Reading in Ethics and Moral Problems, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*, ed. by Russ Shafer-Landau (Oxford University Press, 2018).

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS**

ATTENDANCE/READING QUIZZES: Attendance is mandatory and students should complete all required reading prior to class. I will begin each class when required reading is assigned by rolling a six-sided die. If I roll even, you get a reading quiz; if odd, then you're off the hook. Each quiz will consist of three questions (all True/False, Multiple Choice, or Fill in the Blank). You'll get 1 free

point for each question you get wrong (this free point is for the attendance portion of the grade). Each correct answer will then be worth a 2 points.

MIDTERM: The midterm will be a comprehensive examination that will include all material covered prior. It will include questions with multiple forms as well as some that require that you provide some short, written answers. I will give more details on it as the semester progresses.

DEBATE PARTICIPATION: There will be three debates during the semester. In each, there will be two small groups responsible for arguing one side. I will assign these groups such that everyone will be in a presenting group once during the semester. The dates for these debates are Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>, Apr. 12<sup>th</sup>, and May 15<sup>th</sup>. If you know already that you'll be missing class on one of these dates, you have until Feb. 9<sup>th</sup> to inform me of this. I will then make sure that you are accommodated with a date where you will be in attendance. I'll give more details about the format of these as we get closer. You will get the relevant points for participation in these by performing two simple tasks: (1) *being present* on the day when you should present, and (2) *saying something* when your group is given the chance. If you do both, you get full credit. If you do one, you get half credit. If you do neither, you get *zero* credit.

ARGUMENTATIVE PAPER: You will write a 3-4 page argumentative essay in response to a prompt, which I will distribute towards the end of the semester. You will be expected to take a stand on an issue and offer a philosophical argument for your view in which you also address possible objections. We will discuss this in more detail towards the end of the semester.

FINAL EXAM.: This examination will be similar to the midterm in format, but will be longer and more difficult.

## GRADE BREAKDOWN

Attendance/Reading Quizzes	20%
Midterm	25%
Debate Participation	5%
Argumentative Paper	20%
Final Exam.	30%

## POINT TO GRADE CONVERSION

A	=	$93 \leq x$
A-	=	$90 \leq x \leq 93$
B+	=	$87 \leq x \leq 90$
B	=	$83 \leq x \leq 87$
B-	=	$80 \leq x \leq 83$
C+	=	$77 \leq x \leq 80$
C	=	$70 \leq x \leq 77$
D+	=	$67 \leq x \leq 70$
D	=	$60 \leq x \leq 67$
F	=	$x < 60$

## SCHEDULE

*FE* = *The Fundamentals of Ethics*

*EL* = *The Ethical Life*

### WEEK 1 – INTRODUCTION AND THE GOOD LIFE

- Jan 30            No assigned reading.
- Feb 1            *FE*, Ch. 1: Hedonism, Its Powerful Appeal

### WEEK 2 – THE GOOD LIFE: HEDONISM AND ANTI-HEDONISM

- Feb 6            *EL*, Ch. 1: “Hedonism” (Mill)
- Feb 8            *EL*, Ch. 2: “The Experience Machine” (Nozick)  
*FE*, Ch. 2: Is Happiness All that Matters?

### WEEK 3 – THE GOOD LIFE AND MEANING

- Feb 13           *EL*, Ch. 5: “Happiness and Meaning” (Wolf)
- Feb 15           **First Debate: Hedonism** (*no assigned reading*)

### WEEK 4 – NORMATIVE ETHICS I: ARISTOTELIAN VIRTUE ETHICS

- Feb 20           *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book I, Chpts. 1-7 (Aristotle, on *Blackboard*)
- Feb 22           No class.

### WEEK 5 – NORMATIVE ETHICS I: ARISTOTELIAN VIRTUE ETHICS (CONT.)

- Feb 27           *N.E.*, Book I, Chpts. 8-10 (Aristotle, on *Blackboard*)  
*FE*, Ch. 17: Virtue Ethics (only pp. 256-265)
- Mar 1            *EL*, Ch. 12: “Nicomachean Ethics” (Aristotle)  
*FE*, Ch. 17: Virtue Ethics (pp. 266-275)

### WEEK 6 – NORMATIVE ETHICS II: MORALITY AND RATIONALITY

- Mar 6            *EL*, Ch. 14: “Moral Distinctions Not Derived from Reason” (Hume)
- Mar 8            *EL*, Ch. 9: “The Good Will” (Kant, only pp. 107-113)

### WEEK 7 – NORMATIVE ETHICS II: KANT

- Mar 13           *EL*, Ch. 9: “The Categorical Imperative” (Kant, pp. 113-119)  
*FE*, Ch. 11: The Kantian Perspective – Fairness & Justice

Mar 15            *FE*, Ch. 12: The Kantian Perspective – Autonomy & Respect

--- [ **Spring Break** ] ---

WEEK 8 – MIDTERM

Mar 27            Review Session (*no assigned reading*)

Mar 29            **Midterm** (*no assigned reading*)

WEEK 9 – NORMATIVE ETHICS III: CONSEQUENTIALISM

Apr 3             *EL*, Ch. 8: “Utilitarianism” (Mill)

Apr 5             *FE*, Ch. 9: Consequentialism – Its Nature and Attractions

WEEK 10 – NORMATIVE ETHICS III: CONSEQUENTIALISM (CONT.)

Apr 10            *FE*, Ch. 10: Consequentialism – Its Difficulties

Apr 12            **Second Debate: The Trolley Problem** (*no assigned readings*)

WEEK 11 – METAETHICAL CONCERNS

Apr 17            *FE*, Ch. 15: Ethical Pluralism and Absolute Moral Rules

Apr 19            *EL*, Ch. 17: “Cultural Relativism” (Gensler)

WEEK 12 – MORAL PROBLEMS AND APPLIED ETHICS

Apr 24            *EL*, Ch. 20: “The Singer Solution to World Poverty” (Singer)

Apr 26            *EL*, Ch. 21: “Feeding the Hungry” (Narveson)

WEEK 13 – MORAL PROBLEMS AND APPLIED ETHICS (CONT.)

May 1             *EL*, Ch. 24: “Puppies, Pigs and People” (Norcross)

May 3             *EL*, Ch. 25: “Moral Standing, the Value of Lives, and Speciesism” (Frey)  
**[Paper Due!]**

WEEK 14 – MORAL PROBLEMS AND APPLIED ETHICS (CONT.)

May 8             **Debate: To Eat Meat, or Not to Eat Meat?** (*no assigned reading*)

May 10            *EL*, Ch. 19: “What Will Future Generations Condemn Us For?” (Appiah)

## WEEK 15 – WRAPPING THINGS UP

May 15            Review Session

### FINAL EXAM

May 17 12:30-2:30 (!)

### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

**ELECTRONICS POLICY:** Cell phones may not be used during class. Keep them out of sight and out of mind (this includes texting, of course). Laptops may not be used during class. If I see them out, I will ask that you put them away.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** There is a zero tolerance policy regarding violations of Towson's academic integrity policy. Violations will be prosecuted to the fullest extent. It is the responsibility of the student to be familiar with the academic integrity policy. It is available at:  
<http://www.towson.edu/studentaffairs/policies/>

**LATE WORK POLICY:** All assignments are due at the specified date. Any papers that are turned in late (even if a few minutes past the official deadline) will receive a full letter grade penalty for each day that the assignment is tardy. Deadline extensions will be granted only in exceptional, *documented* circumstances, and at the discretion of the instructor.

**ATTENDANCE POLICY:** Attendance is mandatory. It is not possible to make up points lost due to one missing the quiz. Also, quiz's will be given at the very *beginning* of class – thus, anyone who misses it because of arriving late will be counted as having *missed* class that day. See the description above of quizzes for more information on this.

**INCOMPLETES:** An 'I' grade may be granted towards the end of the term, but only for verifiable medical reasons or for other *exceptional* documented circumstances beyond the control of the student. This grade will not be granted if the student does not meet either of these criteria. The 'I' automatically becomes an 'F' at the end of the next full semester unless changed by the instructor because missing coursework was completed. If the conditions for granting the original incomplete verifiably persist, the instructor in consultation with the chair of the department may extend the 'I' grade for a period not to exceed an additional regular semester.

**COURSE REPETITION:** Students may retake this class once without permission from the university. Students may not repeat the course more than once without prior permission of the Academic Standards Committee.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** This course complies with Towson University Policies for students with disabilities. If you need accommodation due to a disability, please bring documentation from Disabilities Support Services (410-704-2638).