

**PHIL 2310: Theory of Ethics**  
Fall 2015, Section 101: MWF 8:00–8:50  
Instructor: D.J. Hobbs

*Office:* Marquette Hall #424

*Office Hours:* Mondays and Wednesdays, 9:30-11:00, and by appointment

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**Course Description:** This course will serve as a general introduction to ethical theory. We will examine various perspectives on what we mean when we say that an action is morally right or wrong, how we are to determine what actions are right or wrong, how we should live our lives, and other ethical issues. The course will take a historical approach, beginning with the ancient Greeks and including representatives of diverse philosophical traditions. As a part of discussing these historical perspectives, we will examine the role that ethical theory plays in helping us to think about the moral questions that confront us every day. The course will contain both lecture and student participation – discussion is highly encouraged.

**Knowledge Area Outcomes:**

Phil 2310 is one of the two courses in the Human Nature and Ethics knowledge area. The Learning Outcomes of this knowledge area are the following: At the completion of core studies the student will be able to:

1. Assess views of human nature in various philosophical traditions, including classic Greek and Catholic philosophical traditions.
2. Argue for one of the major ethical theories over another in terms of philosophical cogency and practical outcome.
3. Use philosophical reasoning to develop the student's own position on central issues in human nature and ethics, for example, the relation between mind and body, the problem of freedom and determinism, the spiritual and affective dimensions of human life, the extent of human knowledge, the justification of moral judgments, and the elucidation of moral norms.

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of the course,

1. The students will be able to state and provide reasons for the basic positions of the major philosophical theories of Western ethics, including virtue theory, natural law theory, deontology, and consequentialism/utilitarianism. *Means of Assessing:* Response Paper, Exams
2. The student will be able to state and provide reasons for principle objections to major Western ethical theories, including ethical egoism and various forms of moral relativism. *Means of Assessing:* Response Paper, Exams
3. The student will be able to discuss a significant alternative to traditional Western ethics as it relates to Western ethics. *Means of Assessing:* Response Paper, Exams
4. The student will be able to compare and contrast positions of the ethical theories studied in the course. *Means of Assessing:* Exams, Final Paper
5. The student will be able to take and defend a position in ethics that addresses significant objections to the position. *Means of Assessing:* Final Paper

**Relation between Course Objectives and Area Outcomes:**

1. Although the five learning objectives are closely interconnected, numbers 4 and 5 above will mostly satisfy the second outcome. By reflecting on how ethics has been conceived and comparing different views, students will be able to argue for one of the major ethical theories over another.
2. In numbers 1 to 3 above students analyze and criticize the basic components of ethical theories and this will satisfy the third outcome: to use philosophical reasoning to develop the student's own position on central issues in ethics.

3. Outcome one does not apply to this course.

**Course Texts:**

Steven M. Cahn and Peter Markie, *Ethics: History, Theory, and Contemporary Issues* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.)  
Additional readings will be provided on D2L.

**Course Requirements:** Students are expected to complete one response paper (3-5 pages), two examinations, and one final paper (6-10 pages).

*Response Paper:* Students are expected to turn in one three-to-five page response to the course readings. This response paper is to focus on the student's reaction to one of the readings for the week it is turned in: what he or she finds most philosophically interesting about the reading, a comparison with a previous text, etc. The paper must consist of at least three double-spaced pages of good philosophical writing, but is to be no more than five pages in length. This paper is meant to assist the students in developing proficiency in philosophical writing before composing the final paper, and I will return it with comments intended to help the students develop their writing skills. The response paper may be turned in during any class period the student wishes, but is due *no later than* the class of October 30.

*Exams:* Each exam will consist of one section containing matching, multiple-choice, and/or true-and-false questions, one short-answer section, and one essay section. These exams will be given in class as indicated in the course schedule. The purpose of the exams is for the student to demonstrate a thorough understanding of course readings. A study guide will be provided prior to each examination.

*Paper:* The term paper (due on the date of the final exam) is to be 6-10 pages in length. More details on this paper will be given later in the semester. Students are expected to formulate their own paper topic (within the guidelines to be given later) and are required to discuss their final papers with the instructor well in advance of the due date. I will also be available to read preliminary drafts.

*Grading Policy:* The breakdown of the final grade for the course is as follows:

Response Paper: 10% of total grade

Exams: 25% of total grade each, for a total of 50% for both exams

Paper: 35% of total grade

Participation (to be assessed through in-class discussions): 5% of total grade

The grading scale is as follows:

A: 100% – 93%

AB: 92% – 88%

B: 87% – 83%

BC: 82% – 78%

C: 77% – 73%

CD: 72% – 68%

D: 67% – 63%

F: 62% or below

**Course Policies:**

*Attendance:* As per the university undergraduate attendance policy, students are responsible for attending all class meetings for courses in which they are registered. Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class period. Repeated absences will lower the student's participation grade.

*Missed Exams:* Students will only be permitted to make up missed examinations with good reason; see instructor for details. If you know ahead of time that you will not be present at the scheduled time for an

examination, inform the instructor as soon as possible. Similarly, if you miss an examination due to an unforeseen difficulty, inform the instructor of the reason for your absence as soon as possible.

*Late Papers:* The response paper is due during any normal class period up to and including that of October 30. The final paper is due on the date of this course's final exam. *No late final papers will be accepted.*

*Students with Disabilities:* Any student with a relevant disability should contact the Office of Disability Services as soon as possible so that they can make the proper academic accommodations for you. The Office of Disability Services at Marquette is here to help any student with a disability succeed in the classroom, but they must be notified of your disability before they can help. The ODS can be reached by telephone at 414.288.1645 or by email at [ods@marquette.edu](mailto:ods@marquette.edu).

*Policy on Electronic Devices:* Electronic devices used to take lecture notes or access course materials are permitted in class. Use of electronic devices for other purposes (e.g. entertainment or communication) is not permitted. Cell phones, etc., are to be turned off for the duration of class.

*Statement on Academic Dishonesty:* Academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Examples include, but are not limited to: cheating (copying answers or using unauthorized electronic devices during an examination, presenting another person's work as one's own, etc.), plagiarism (unethical use of unauthorized sources, using another's ideas or words without proper attribution, etc.), and academic fraud (submitting substantial portions of the same work for more than one course without receiving permission from all instructors involved, etc.). If you have questions about whether something counts as academic dishonesty, feel free to ask. Please acquaint yourselves with the University's policies concerning academic dishonesty at: <http://bulletin.marquette.edu/undergrad/academicregulations/#academichonestypolicy>.

## Course Schedule:

DATE:	TOPIC:	ASSIGNMENT:
8/31	Introduction: What is Ethics?	None
9/2	Introduction: Course Policies	None
9/4	Introduction: An Overview of Ethics	None
9/7	Labor Day	No Class
9/9	Divine Command Theory: Plato	<i>Euthyphro</i> , p. 5-16
9/11	Divine Command Theory: Plato	<i>Euthyphro</i> , p. 5-16
9/14	Virtue Ethics: Plato	<i>Crito</i> , p. 33-42
9/16	Virtue Ethics: Plato	<i>Crito</i> , p. 33-42
9/18	Virtue Ethics: Aristotle	From <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book I, p. 124-134
9/21	Virtue Ethics: Aristotle	From <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book I, p. 124-134
9/23	Virtue Ethics: Aristotle	From <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book II, p. 134-140
9/25	Virtue Ethics: Aristotle	From <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Book II, p. 134-140
9/28	Natural Law: The Stoics	<i>Enchiridion</i> , p. 203-214
9/30	Natural Law: The Stoics	<i>Enchiridion</i> , p. 203-214
10/2	Non-Western Traditions: Daoism	<i>Dao De Jing</i> (Link on D2L)
10/5	Non-Western Traditions: Daoism	<i>Dao De Jing</i> (Link on D2L)
10/7	Review for Exam #1	None
10/9	SRS Conference	No Class
10/12	Exam #1	None
10/14	Ethics in the Media: In-Class Movie	None
10/16	Ethics in the Media: Discussion	None
10/19	Moral Skepticism: David Hume	<i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> , III.I, §1-2, p. 279-287
10/21	Moral Skepticism: David Hume	<i>A Treatise of Human Nature</i> , III.I, §1-2, p. 279-287
10/23	Fall Break	No Class
10/26	Deontology: Immanuel Kant	From <i>Groundwork</i> , p. 316-330
10/28	Deontology: Immanuel Kant	From <i>Groundwork</i> , p. 316-330
10/30	Deontology: Immanuel Kant	“On a Supposed Right to Tell Lies from Benevolent Motives” (Link on D2L) Response Paper Due
11/2	Utilitarianism: John Stuart Mill	From <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapters II-IV, p. 364-383
11/4	Utilitarianism: John Stuart Mill	From <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapters II-IV, p. 364-383
11/6	Utilitarianism: John Stuart Mill	From <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Chapters II-IV, p. 364-383
11/9	Ethical Egoism: Henry Sidgwick	<i>The Methods of Ethics</i> , Book I, Chapter 7, p. 40-43 (PDF on D2L)

11/11	Ethical Egoism: Henry Sidgwick	<i>The Methods of Ethics</i> , Book II, Chapter 5, p. 75-82 (PDF on D2L)
11/13	Review for Exam #2	None
11/16	Exam #2	None
11/18	Beyond Ethics: Søren Kierkegaard	<i>Fear and Trembling</i> , Problema I, p. 54-67 (PDF on D2L)
11/20	Beyond Ethics: Søren Kierkegaard	<i>Fear and Trembling</i> , Problema I, p. 54-67 (PDF on D2L)
11/23	Beyond Ethics: Søren Kierkegaard	<i>Fear and Trembling</i> , Problema I, p. 54-67 (PDF on D2L)
11/25	Thanksgiving Break	No Class
11/27	Thanksgiving Break	No Class
11/30	Beyond Ethics: Friedrich Nietzsche	From <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> , Excerpts from the Preface and First Essay, p. 397-405
12/2	Beyond Ethics: Friedrich Nietzsche	From <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> , Excerpts from the First Essay, p. 397-405
12/4	Beyond Ethics: Friedrich Nietzsche	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i> , Chapter IV, Apothegms and Interludes (Link on D2L)
12/7	Emotivism: A. J. Ayer	“A Critique of Ethics,” p. 485-491
12/9	Emotivism: A. J. Ayer	“A Critique of Ethics,” p. 485-491
12/11	Conclusions: How Should We Live?	None
12/16	Course Final	Final paper due at 3:00

This schedule is subject to revision as needed. The exact pace of the course will depend on how quickly we are able to cover the essential points of each philosophical position.