

PHIL 2306 - 001, 002, 003 | Introduction to Ethics

Spring 2024

Dr. Harris B. Bechtol

CRN: 23463, 23464, 23465

Class Times:

- Section 001: MW 12:30-1:45 PM; Location: MADLA 205
- Section 002: TTh 11:00 AM -12:15 PM; Location: MADLA 205
- Section 003: TTh 12:30-1:45; Location: MADLA 353

Office Hours: MTW 2:45-4:45 PM; Th 9-11 AM

Office Location: CAB 326

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Introduction To Ethics. 3 Hours.

The systematic evaluation of classical and/or contemporary ethical theories concerning the good life, human conduct in society, morals, and standards of value.

COURSE INTRODUCTION

Hi, this is Dr. Harris Bechtol, but people often call me Dr. B. I am really excited to be teaching you this semester! We have a really exciting class to experience together based on my over ten years of study of and research in the history of philosophy. This course will prove to be important not only for your overall education but especially for your own personal journey in coming to understand what being ethical can require of you. This course is designed as an introduction to the major ethical theories in the history of Western philosophy. Philosophy began as an important tool for understanding how humans make their way in the world. Following this ancient purpose of philosophy, we will be exploring in this course how we make our way in the world as ethical beings. As we explore the major ethical theories in the history of Western philosophy, we will address the following questions: why is ethics important? What is required of us to live ethically? What does being ethical mean? We will move historically through the history of philosophy beginning with the ethical theories of Plato and Aristotle before turning to the approaches to ethics in Immanuel Kant and John Stuart Mill. We will end the semester by looking at two developments in ethical theory during the 20th and 21st centuries under the banners of response ethics and care ethics. Through this survey, students will not only engage with the philosophical texts and ideas but also have the opportunity to understand the world and their place in it through many ethical lenses. For this learning process to be effective, the course will consist of careful reading, listening to lectures, openness to learning, respectful discussion, and critical writing.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. Translated by Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2011. ISBN-13 978-0226026756
- Kant, Immanuel. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Translated by James W. Ellington. 3rd Edition. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1993. ISBN-13: 978-0-87220-166-8
- Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism*. Edited by George Sher. 2nd Edition. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2002. ISBN-13: 978-0-87220-605-2
- Plato, *Five Dialogues*. Translated by G.M.A. Grube 2nd Edition. Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2002. ISBN-13: 978-0872206335
- Packback Account (see below for more information)
- Other Readings on Blackboard

COURSE OBJECTIVES

1. Students will reproduce the guiding ideas of the major ethical theories today.
2. Students will describe the various principles for what being ethical requires.
3. Students will interpret philosophical texts and apply these skills in writing critically about these texts.
4. Students will reflect on their own way of ethically existing in their world.

COURSE WORK

The basis for your grade is as follows:

(1) Reading Quizzes	20%
(2) Packback Questions	30%
(3) Two Exams	50% (25% each)

1. Attendance/Reading Quizzes: Considering that we are reading philosophy, coming to class for lectures and discussion is paramount because often times the reading is difficult to understand. Often only through participation in class (i.e. listening, taking notes, asking questions, and talking during discussion) do the texts begin to make sense. **As an incentive to help you remember to come to class, take notes, and engage with the material, we will have an in class reading quiz at the end of every week throughout the semester. I will keep a running tally of your quiz points. You will have 15 quizzes in order to earn this 20% of your total quiz grade. If you miss a quiz, I will only allow you to make up the quiz due to medical issues.** If you miss class, your responsibility is to acquire any information and notes that you may have missed. Get these from your peers. Once you have acquired notes from class, I would be happy to discuss any questions that you may have about the information covered on that day.

2. Assignments:

a. PACKBACK QUESTIONS

The Packback Questions platform (www.packback.co) will be used for online discussion about class topics. Packback Questions is an online community where you can be curious with your responses and questions about how what we are studying relates to your life and the your world.

I have one primary goal for using Packback for our course: to help deepen your understanding of the material by getting you to connect the philosophical ideas that we are exploring with your own personal life.

Your participation on Packback will count toward 30% of your final grade. In order to receive your points, you will have 6 Packback assignments (see the schedule below for tentative due dates). For *each* assignment you must write:

- 1 post of your own with a minimum Curiosity Score of 50 in which you are asking an open ended question about the topic that I assign for each post.
- 2 responses to people in our class with a minimum Curiosity Score of 50 for *each* of your responses.

All posts must be relevant to our class subject matter. And all posts must follow the netiquette guidelines for our course. You will receive 1 point for your post and 1 point for each of your responses *as long as* your posts meet the Curiosity Score minimum *and* are pertinent to the prompt for that post. You will only receive half credit if you do not meet the Curiosity Score minimum. For each due date, your posts and responses will be due by Friday at 11:59 PM on the date that they are due unless stated otherwise in class or in an email. If you miss the deadline, you will not get any points for that assignment.

The Curiosity Score is based on criteria on Packback, and with each post you will receive real-time coaching on the right hand side of your screen on what you can do to raise your curiosity score.

How to Register for Packback and Submit Assignments:

You will need to pay for Packback on the Packback website. It costs \$39. If you need assistance in paying for this, reach out to help@packback.co asking them for assistance with paying. Once you have an account on Packback, go to the “Packback Information” navigation link on our Blackboard page, and click the link on this page that says “Packback — Click Here to Begin.” **You must enter Packback in this way in order for your grades to link with Blackboard.**

If you have ANY questions or concerns regarding Packback throughout our semester, please contact the customer support team at help@packback.co!

Schedule, topics, and assignments are subject to change at the discretion of the Instructor.

Scheduled Posts for Packback (see schedule below for due dates):

- PB 1: Choose one of the following as your prompt. What question do you have about (1) the nature of ethics? (2) what is required of us to live ethically? (3) the most pressing ethical issue right now?
- PB 2: Do you think that knowledge or wisdom of virtues is enough to be ethical as Socrates and Plato argue? Why or why not?
- PB 3: What do you think about Aristotle's virtue ethics in terms of its usefulness as an ethical theory today? You can write about his understanding of happiness, the nature of the moral virtues, the importance of prudence (*phronesis*), the requirements he assigns to happiness, or any other topic we discussed.
- PB 4: If we just need to listen to reason to hear and follow the moral law in us, according to Kant, what is preventing us from doing so?
- PB 5: What objection toward the principle of utility as the guide for our ethics, according to Mill, do you have even after Mill covered so many? Or what objection do you think he didn't answer well enough and why?
- PB 6: What limitations do you see in the non-normative approach of response ethics? Is the call from the face of the other enough to make us ethical?

b. EXAMS

You will have a midterm and final exam that will each take place in class. This exam will consist of multiple choice, true/false, and short answer questions over the material that we read and discuss in class together.

GRADING

Your final grade will be determined based on the above requirements. Late assignments will not be accepted unless I tell you otherwise. Grade equivalents are as follows:

A 89.5-100 B 79.5-89 C 69.5-79 D 59.5-69 F 59.4-0

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

Weeks	Sections, Themes, and Readings	Writing Assignment Due Dates
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Weeks 1-2	1/16	I. Course Introduction Section -Introductions -Syllabus & Netiquette Discussion -"How to Read Philosophy" (Blackboard)	PackBack 1 due 1/19
Weeks 2-5	1/25	II. Ancient Ethical Theories: Plato and Aristotle -Plato, <i>Five Dialogues</i> , "Euthyphro" -Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> (selections)	PB 2 due 2/9 PB 3 due 3/1 MIDTERM 3/5 o 3/6 depending on your class day
Weeks 6-8	3/7	III. Immanuel Kant and Deontology -Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> (selections)	PB 4 due 4/5
Weeks 9-12	4/9	IV. John Stuart Mill and Utilitarianism -Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> (selections)	PB 5 due 4/19
Weeks 13-15	4/18	V. Critiques: Response and Care Ethics -Emmanuel Levinas, "The Paradox of Morality" (Blackboard) -Kelly Oliver, "What is Response Ethics" and "Vision Beyond Domination" (Blackboard)	PB 6 due 4/30

Week
16

Final Exam
-Sec 001: TBA
-Sec 002: TBA
-Sec 003: TBA

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE *AND* NETIQUETTE

A college philosophy class is a serious undertaking. Each one of you deserves a classroom environment that is most conducive for your learning. So make sure to use the restroom before class so that you minimize the disruptions of people leaving in the middle of class and attend the entire class each day. Additionally, cell phones must be turned off or turned to silent **and put away during class**. Come talk to me if this is an issue. The use of computers for taking notes is **not** allowed unless you have a DSS exception for the use of your computer for taking notes. You may drink an appropriate beverage in class, and if you need to eat something in class, choose something that is not disruptive. Do not begin preparing to leave class before the end of the class session. I will be keeping my eye on the clock.

As more and more of life is moved online and education is consistently moving more online, each of you will be consistently required in your professional lives to attend meetings online and participate in online discussion groups. I imagine, too, that many projects will be completed in your own profession through online collaborations. All of this virtual time online needs to be taken seriously, carefully, and responsibly. Hence, the idea of netiquette: our etiquette for the (inter)net. In an effort to help begin preparing everyone for how to participate responsibly and be present in an online setting, we will be establishing some “Community Rules” together for our use of Packback. Log in to Blackboard, head to the Discussion Boards page, and post your thoughts based on the directions for the “Community Rules” discussion board. Your participation in this discussion board will count as early bonus towards your grade. I have started the conversation online for us as part of the discussion board instructions.

ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT POLICY

Students at Texas A&M University-San Antonio are expected to adhere to the highest standards of academic honesty and integrity. Academic Dishonesty for which a student is subject to penalty includes cheating, plagiarism, fabrication, multiple submissions, misrepresentation of academic records, facilitating academic dishonesty, unfair advantage, and ethical misconduct. This includes holding other students to the same standards and reporting any incidents of alleged violation of the honesty policy to the instructor involved or, if necessary, to the appropriate academic department head. All students are responsible for being familiar with the Academic Dishonesty Policy, which may be found in the Texas A&M University-San Antonio Student Handbook. University policy prescribes serious consequences for acts of academic misconduct including, but not limited to, a grade of ‘F’ on the particular paper or assignment or a failing grade in the course. Also, a referral may be issued to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities where the sanctions can vary up to possible expulsion from the University.

Schedule, topics, and assignments are subject to change at the discretion of the Instructor.

Considering the potential consequences of academic misconduct, it is obviously in students' best interests to avoid even the appearance of such behavior. If you are ever unclear whether a specific act might constitute academic misconduct, please contact your instructor for an assessment of the situation. All student term papers and other written assignments are subject to analysis by anti-plagiarism software.

AI STATEMENT FOR COURSE

Intellectual honesty is vital to an academic community and for my fair evaluation of your work. All work submitted in this course must be your own, completed in accordance with the University's academic regulations. The use of ChaptGPT and other AI composition software should, as a result, be avoided to assure your own intellectual honesty. If you desire to this kind of software, do not use it for generating your paper or your ideas. Once you have your paper written, you can use it to help edit what you have already written.

DISABILITY SUPPORT SERVICES

Texas A&M University-San Antonio is committed to providing equitable access to students with disabilities through reasonable accommodation in accordance with The Americans with Disabilities Act, as amended, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. If you have a disability that may require accommodations, please contact Disability Support Services (DSS) for the coordination of services. Disability Support Services (DSS) is currently offering phone and virtual appointments as well as in-person meetings as necessary, by appointment only. To schedule a phone, virtual or in-person appointment, call DSS at 210-784-1335 or email us at dss@tamusa.edu.

COUNSELING RESOURCES

If you or someone you know is experiencing life stressors, emotional difficulties, or mental health concerns at Texas A&M University – San Antonio, please contact the Office of Student Counseling & Wellness Services (SC&WS) located in Modular C, Room 166 (Rear entrance) or call 210-784-1331 between the hours of 8:00AM and 5:00PM. All mental health services provided by SC&WS are free, confidential (as the law allows), and are not part of a student's academic or university record. SC&WS provides brief individual, couples, and group therapy, crisis intervention, consultation, case management, and prevention services. For more information, please visit www.tamusa.edu/studentcounseling. Any students interested in scheduling an appointment should call (210) 784-1331 Monday through Friday, 8:00AM – 5:00PM. After hours, please contact UPD at 911 or text "HOME" to 741-741 24/7/365 to connect with a trained crisis counselor. The National Suicide Prevention hotline also offers a 24/7/365 hotline at 1-800-273-8255.

COURSE EVALUATIONS

Schedule, topics, and assignments are subject to change at the discretion of the Instructor.

At the end of the semester, you will have the opportunity to complete an evaluation of the course and my teaching. This will be available online through Blackboard. I will inform you as to when you will be able to fill this out.