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# PHIL 115Q

## Introduction to Ethics (INQ)

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### Course Description

This course is an inquiry-based examination of fundamental moral questions, such as the best way of life, the relation between happiness and moral excellence, and the nature of ethical reasoning, as treated by major philosophers—and as applied to contemporary problems.

### Learning Outcomes

- Students will understand and be able to articulate the differences between the major schools of ethical thought.
- Students will gain knowledge of the historical development of ethical and moral thinking in the West from ancient Greece to the present.
- Students will be able to apply ethical theory to contemporary problems in ethics.
- Students will gain skill in asking critical questions about, analyzing and evaluating ethical and moral arguments.
- Students will develop skills in analytical and argumentative writing.
- Students will learn to formulate clearly articulated ethical questions and to seek, craft, and assess well-reasoned answers to them.

### Evaluation

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| Quizzes/In-class assignments (lowest 1 dropped) | 15% |
| Argument Papers                                 | 20% |
| Discussion Facilitation Assignment              | 5%  |
| Participation                                   | 5%  |
| Applied Ethics Paper                            | 20% |
| Midterm   | 20% |
| Final   | 15% |

### Grading Scale

|               |    |
|---------------|----|
| 93.0 - 100:   | A  |
| 90.0 - 92.99: | A- |
| 87.0 - 89.99: | B+ |
| 83.0 - 86.99: | B  |
| 80.0 - 82.99: | B- |
| 77.0 - 79.99: | C+ |
| 73.0 - 76.99: | C  |
| 70.0 - 72.99: | C- |
| 67.0 - 69.99: | D+ |
| 60.0 - 66.99: | D  |
| < 60.0:       | F  |

Please note that because of bonus opportunities, I will *never* round scores up.

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Fall 2016  
MWF 2:30 – 3:35

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Phone: 770-784-8369  
Office: Humanities Hall 204  
Office Hours: MW 3:40 – 5 by appt

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### Materials

Edmonds, David. *Would YOU Kill the Fat Man?* Princeton, 2013.  
Marino, Gordon, ed. *Ethics: Essential Writings*. Modern Library, 2010.

### Milestones

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#### September 23 & October 5

Applied Ethics discussion board contributions due

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#### October 3

Two Argument Papers must be complete

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#### October 7

Midterm

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#### November 4

Last day to submit Argument Papers

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#### December 3

Applied Ethics Paper due

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#### December 13

Final Exam, 2 PM

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## Assignment Descriptions

### *Reading Quizzes/Assignments*

You will have assigned readings for each class, which you should complete before coming to class. Quizzes on these readings will be unannounced, and will typically happen during the first 5 minutes of class. If you are late to class, you will miss the quiz. Quizzes may also cover material from the previous class, so you will be wise to re-read your notes from the previous day as you prepare for each class. On occasion, in lieu of a quiz, you will complete an in-class assignment. I will drop the lowest quiz/assignment grade. Please note that I do not make up missed quizzes except in the case of a documented illness or an official college absence (athletics, debate, etc.). In the case of planned absences, you must provide documentation within the first two weeks of class that such absences are scheduled in order to be eligible to make up quizzes.

*Midterm Exam:* The midterm in this class will cover all material from the first half of the semester. I will not schedule makeup exams except in the case of documented illness or official college business.

*Final Exam:* The final in this class is cumulative of all material covered during the semester. I do not reschedule final exams, period. All schedule change requests must be submitted through the office of Academic Affairs. Please note the following Academic Affairs policy: “Leaving early for rides or flights, vacations, relatives’ or friends’ weddings or graduation, jobs, or having more than one exam on one day, are not considered valid reasons to request an earlier or later exam.”

*Argument Papers:* Students must complete FOUR one-page argument papers over the course of the semester, two of which must be completed prior to the midterm. ONE of the papers submitted prior to the midterm may be revised for re-grading, provided that it is re-submitted within a week of receiving an initial grade and comments. The goal of this assignment is to develop your ability to express and engage with philosophical ideas in a concise, written form; as such, NO secondary source use is permitted. In each paper you will develop ONE argument in response to an argument found in the assigned reading. Your papers will be scored on the basis of clarity, argumentative effectiveness, and the extent to which they demonstrate accurate understanding of the text at hand. Further instructions are available on Canvas and will be distributed in class.

*Discussion Facilitation:* In groups, students will be responsible for leading our class discussion once during the semester, having met outside of class to prepare. With your group, you will formulate philosophical questions that lead the class to analyze the key philosophical ideas in the assigned reading. Each of the philosophical questions you raise must be related to **central concerns** in the assigned reading, and your questions should be posted on Canvas 24 hours prior to our class meeting. **Groups should avoid spending time summarizing/regurgitating what the author says, and should aim to produce questions that move beyond basic textual analysis.** You may setup questions briefly by looking at specific passages with the class, but this should not be done in a didactic way. Summarizing and lecturing the class will result in a low grade. The goal is to figure out the most interesting philosophical questions that we can discuss in light of the reading, and to sustain a focused conversation with these questions for the length of the class. Further instructions are available on Canvas and will be distributed in class

*Participation:* Philosophy is fundamentally conversational. Thus, regular, engaged participation in our ongoing conversation is a required element of this class. Participation in this class requires, minimally, that you do the following:

- Come to class regularly, and do not miss more than 3 classes for any reason.
- Refrain from using cell phones or other electronic devices in class.
- Regularly contribute to the conversation by:
  - o Asking questions
  - o Making comments informed by the text (and citing it when you can)
  - o LISTENING to your classmates and responding to them
  - o Taking care not to dominate the conversation
- Bring your book/materials to class

- Be on time
- Actively participate in small group activities
- Participate in the Canvas discussion forum (see Applied Ethics Paper assignment for details)

Please note that students who never speak up in our large-group discussions will earn, at most, a C for their participation.

*Applied Ethics Paper:* During the final weeks of the semester, we will be discussing 3 contemporary ethical issues of the class's choosing. Topics will be chosen by students in the course, who will be responsible, starting in week 4 of the semester, for collaboratively formulating ethical questions about pressing issues in contemporary life. The formation and selection of the 3 applied ethical questions will take place over the course of 3-4 weeks in the course discussion forum. Our readings for the final weeks of the semester will be contemporary philosophical essays that respond to these (or closely-related) applied ethical questions.

In the Applied Ethics paper, you will engage one of these topics through the lens of one of the major ethical theorists we have read during the semester. Your goal is to make a philosophical argument that addresses the following: 1) how the Philosopher you choose would respond to the particular problem you choose, 2) why you believe they would take this viewpoint, 3) what is the most obvious objection to this viewpoint, 4) how the Philosopher would respond to that objection, and 5) whether that philosopher's argument is ultimately convincing. More detailed instructions will be forthcoming. The completed paper should be approximately 4 pages typed, double-spaced, Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins all the way around.

## Course Policies

### *Classroom Conduct*

We're going to talk quite a bit about arguments in this class—and we'll definitely have a few of our own!—but that doesn't mean that we don't have ground rules. In fact, being respectful of one another, even when we disagree, is absolutely crucial to making this an environment in which everyone can learn. There are several ways we can show one another respect; the following are the ones I insist upon:

- We may attack ideas, but never people.
- Listen to others when they're talking.
- Don't use cell phones or computers in the classroom.
- Work on in-class assignments when provided time to do so. Philosophy is hard. This is not time-filler; I have specifically set aside time for you to practice working collaboratively on the exercises I assign, and to do so with my assistance. Make wise use of this time. DO NOT take it as an invitation to leave early, pack up your things, chat, etc.
- No sleeping in class. Sleepers will be marked absent.

Violations of the classroom conduct guidelines will result in penalties to your participation grade.

### *Email Policy*

I strive to stay in touch with you outside of class hours, and will generally attempt to answer messages within 24 hours. Please note, however, that I will not respond to questions sent the evening before a scheduled exam or the due date of the final essay. Finally, I **do not discuss grades via email**. Please make an appointment to see me if you would like to discuss any course grades.

### *Academic Honesty*

Academic Honesty is extremely important, and so violations of the Oxford College Honor Code will not be tolerated. I will not hesitate to report any such violations to the Honor Council. Infractions of the Honor Code include plagiarism, cheating, seeking or giving unauthorized assistance, and lying related to academic matters. Further information on Honor Code infractions and procedures are available in the Oxford College Student Handbook, and online: [http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current\\_students/Academic/academic-success/student-honor-code/index.dot](http://oxford.emory.edu/audiences/current_students/Academic/academic-success/student-honor-code/index.dot)

### *Disability Access*

I encourage any students with disabilities that may impact their access to or performance in any component of this course to register with Oxford College's ADSR, and to let me know about necessary accommodations as soon as possible. Additionally, please be aware that my office is located on the second floor of a building without disability access. I will, accordingly, be happy to make arrangements to meet with any student on the first floor of Humanities Hall, should this be necessary.

## Schedule

8/24 – Intro; Am I a Jerk? **Link on Canvas**

8/26 – Philosophical and Ethical Inquiry—what is it? Edmonds, Prologue and Chapter 1

8/29: Midgley, Preface/Chapter 1 **Handout on Canvas**  
8/31: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I, Marino pp. 43-56  
9/2: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book I, Marino pp. 56-65

9/5: LABOR DAY – No Class  
9/7: Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book II, Marino pp. 66-77  
9/9: ONLINE CLASS - Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* Book III, Marino pp. 80-87

9/12: Augustine, *City of God*, Marino pp. 107-118  
9/14: Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* [The Natural Law], Marino pp. 119-133  
9/16: Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* [Of Human Law], **Handout on Canvas**

9/19: Aquinas, Double-Effect, and the Trolley Problem, Edmonds Chapter 2 and 4, **Link on Canvas**  
9/21: DDE and the Trolley Problem, contd., Edmonds Chapter 5  
9/23: Applied Ethics: Asking better questions [First online AE discussion contribution due by 10 AM.]

9/26: Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Marino pp. 188-200  
9/28: Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Marino pp. 203-212  
9/30: Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Marino pp. 213-224

10/3: Kant and the Trolley Problem, Edmonds chapter 6  
10/5: Review Day [Second AE discussion contribution due by 10 AM]  
10/7: MIDTERM

10/10: FALL BREAK – No Class  
10/12: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Marino pp. 225-238  
10/14: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Marino pp. 238-248 [WITHDRAWAL DEADLINE]

10/17: Mill, *Utilitarianism*, Marino pp. 249-255  
10/19: Utilitarianism and the Trolley Problem, Edmonds Chapter 8  
10/21: NO CLASS – Dr. Tarver at Conference

10/24: Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Marino pp. 277-285  
10/26: Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Marino pp. 285-298  
10/28: Sartre, *Existentialism and Human Emotion*, Marino pp. 328-332, **Handout on Canvas**

10/31: King, *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, Marino pp. 356-377  
11/2: Noddings, *Caring*, Marino pp. 424-435  
11/4: Noddings, *Caring*, Marino pp. 435-444 [Last day to submit argument papers.]

11/7: Applied Ethics Topic 1, Reading TBD  
11/9: Applied Ethics Topic 1, Reading TBD  
11/11: Applied Ethics Topic 1, Reading TBD

11/14: Writing philosophically about contemporary problems, “Short Guide to Philosophical Writing,” **Handout on Canvas**  
11/16: Applied Ethics Topic 2, Reading TBD  
11/18: Applied Ethics Topic 2, Reading TBD

11/21: Applied Ethics Topic 2, Reading TBD  
11/23: THANKSGIVING BREAK – No Class  
11/25: THANKSGIVING BREAK – No Class

11/28: Applied Ethics Topic 3, Reading TBD  
11/30: Applied Ethics Topic 3, Reading TBD  
12/2: Applied Ethics Topic 3, Reading TBD [FINAL APPLIED ETHICS PAPER DUE 12/3 BY MIDNIGHT on Canvas]

12/5: Exam Review

**FINAL EXAM: 12/13, 2 PM**