

PHIL 1XX: INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

sample syllabus

OVERVIEW

An introduction to philosophical thinking about morality and human nature. Readings address concrete issues such as world hunger, capital punishment, and pornography, as well as theoretical topics such as human happiness, the nature of right and wrong, and the relationship between morality and law. This particular section will also include discussions of human rights, biomedical ethics, and racial and gender justice. You will be encouraged to question your own beliefs on these issues, and in the process to explore the limit and extent to which ethical theory can play a role in everyday ethical decision making.

TEXTBOOKS

Kwame Anthony Appiah – *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* – ISBN: 9780872204201

Steven M. Cahn, editor – *Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology, 5th Edition* – ISBN: 9780190273637
(3rd and 4th used editions of this book are acceptable, but NOT 2nd and 1st, which lack some of the required readings)

ASSIGNMENTS

45% – Quizzes: three, online, one for each academic unit, multiple choice and essays. 15% each.

20% – Homework: daily précis assignments, worksheets on argument analysis, group work, pop quizzes.

20% – Final exam: multiple choice, text identification, and essay. You may use one letter-sized “cheat sheet.”

15% – Participation: both frequency and quality count, and your regular attendance is factored in as well.

FORMAT

Each class period contains both lecture and discussion. I lecture in a Socratic way, meaning that I frequently ask you to interject and you are responsible for supplying the material as I explain it. For each day we read one or two papers, essays, or articles. Each day I call upon a few students to summarize the day’s readings. These summaries contribute to your discussion grade. The reading load is about 10-15 pages per class period. Most papers are technical and take 1-2 hours to read, depending on your prior philosophical reading experience.

POLICIES

Laptops and tablets are permitted; phones are not. Use common sense and do not bother yourself or others.

Arriving over 15 minutes later is considered an unexcused absence. If I am over 15 minutes late, you may leave.

Attendance and participation are graded subjectively. The more you talk, the more quickly I learn your name.

Late assignments incur a 10% penalty (one letter grade) for each day, unless I have granted an extension.

Extensions, grade disputes, and requests for incomplete grades will be judged on a case-by-case basis.

E-mail is my preferred method of communication. I reply within 48 hours. If I do not, e-mail me again.

The First Rule of Good Discussion: “**Keep an open mind, but not so open that your brain falls out.**”

ACCOMMODATION

Please inform me by the end of the first week of class of any health concerns or documented physical, mental, or learning disabilities. We will work together to help you succeed according to your abilities.

HONOR CODE

I take the Honor Code very seriously. Suspected violations will be reported to the Honor Court and pursued.

READING SCHEDULE AND DUE DATES

Readings marked by (C) are in Cahn's *Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology* required textbook.

All other readings can be found online under "Files," except for the *Cosmopolitanism* book.

All readings must be completed by class time. You must turn in two précis assignments each week for 10 weeks. The first précis is due on 9/18 and the last on 11/20. All précis assignments must be turned in online before class begins.

(1) MORALITY

Week 1 Introduction	Course presentation	M 8/28
	(C) Plato: Excerpts from <i>Crito</i> and <i>Phaedo</i>	W 8/30
	(C) Rachels: The challenge of cultural relativism	F 9/1
Week 2 Utilitarianism	(C) Mill: Utilitarianism	M 9/4
	(C) Pojman: Strengths and weaknesses of utilitarianism	W 9/6
	Nozick: The experience machine	F 9/8
Week 3 Deontology	(C) Kant: The categorical imperative	M 9/11
	(C) O'Neill: A simplified account of Kant's ethics	W 9/13
	Allison: Excerpt from <i>Kant's Theory of Freedom</i>	F 9/15
Week 4 Virtue	(C) Aristotle: The nature of virtue	M 9/18
	MacIntyre: Excerpt from <i>After Virtue</i>	W 9/20
	(C) Held: The ethics of care	F 9/22
Assignment	Quiz #1 due online	F 9/22

(2) JUSTICE

Week 5 Social Contract	(C) Hobbes: The social contract	FIRST PRÉCIS DUE	M 9/25
	Rousseau: Excerpt from <i>On the Social Contract</i>		W 9/27
	(C) Rawls: A Theory of Justice		F 9/29
Weeks 6-7 Social Justice	Sandel: The procedural republic and the unencumbered self		M 10/2
	Mills: Excerpt from <i>The Racial Contract</i>		W 10/4
	Pateman: Excerpt from <i>The Sexual Contract</i>		F 10/6
	(C) Calhoun: Gender bias		M 10/9
	MacKinnon: Excerpt from <i>Toward a Feminist Theory of the State</i>		W 10/11
	Davis: Feminism and abolition		F 10/13
Assignment	Quiz #2 due online		F 10/13

(3) APPLIED ETHICS

Weeks 8-9 <i>Life and Death</i>	FALL BREAK. No class.	M 10/16
	Kant: Excerpt from <i>Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals</i>	W 10/18
	Young: Informed consent and patient autonomy	F 10/20
	(C) Rachels: Active and passive euthanasia	M 10/23
	(C) Warren: On the moral and legal status of abortion	W 10/25
	(C) Berns: The morality of capital punishment	F 10/27
Week 10 <i>Pornography</i>	(C) Longino: Pornography, oppression, and freedom	M 10/30
	(C) Feinberg: The case against pornography: an assessment	W 11/1
	Dworkin: Excerpt from <i>Pornography: Men Possessing Women</i> MacKinnon: Pleasure under patriarchy	F 11/3
Week 11 <i>Affirmative Action</i>	(C) Cahn: Two concepts of affirmative action	M 11/6
	(C) Hanson: Facing facts and responsibilities	W 11/8
	Nagel: Rawls on affirmative action	F 11/10
<i>Assignment</i>	Quiz #3 due online	F 11/10
Weeks 12-13 <i>Poverty</i>	(C) Singer: Famine, affluence, and morality O'Neill: Lifeboat ethics	M 11/13
	(C) Timmerman: A reply to Singer	W 11/15
	Nagel: Poverty and food: why charity is not enough	F 11/17
	Shue: Luxury emissions and subsistence emissions	LAST PRÉCIS M 11/20

Nov. 22 – Nov. 26: Thanksgiving Break

(4) GLOBAL ETHICS

Week 14 <i>Book</i>	Appiah: <i>Cosmopolitanism</i> , chapters 2-3-4 (read and annotate on assigned worksheet)	M 11/27
	Appiah: <i>Cosmopolitanism</i> , chapters 5-6-7 (read and annotate on assigned worksheet)	W 11/29
	Appiah: <i>Cosmopolitanism</i> , chapters 8-9-10 (read and annotate on assigned worksheet)	F 12/1
Week 15 <i>Conclusion</i>	(C) Taylor: The meaning of life	M 12/4
	Rorty: Who are we? Moral universalism and economic triage	W 12/6
	Le Guin: The ones who walk away from Omelas	F 12/8
<i>Assignment</i>	FINAL EXAM IN CLASS	M 12/11