

**PHL 205 Ethics I.: Introduction to Classical Ethics**  
**Philosophy Department**  
**SUNY College at Oswego**  
**Fall 2018 (9:10/Marano 132)**

**Course Description:** In this course, we will examine the works of great thinkers who have offered perspectives on the following questions: How ought I to live? What makes an action right? How should we think about what constitutes a morally valuable experience or life? Are a person's motives important in doing well? What makes a person good? We will try hard to see what is true and what is false in the alternative philosophical approaches to morality suggested by these different questions.

**Professor/Office Hours:** Dr. Robert Card, Professor, Department of Philosophy, 212 Marano Campus Center. Scheduled office hours are Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays, 11:30-12:25, and I am available by appointment. See me after class or contact me via email for an appointment if you cannot come during regular office hours. If I need to cancel office hours for some reason, I will announce this fact in advance.

**Phone and Email Contact Information:** The most effective way to contact me is via email. My email address is: robert.card@oswego.edu Phone and Voicemail: X2793. If you leave a voicemail include your name, class, and contact information. My website is: <http://www.robertcard.com> You will find important course information and resources on my website to help you succeed in this course.

**Required Texts:**

\*Xeroxed Packet (XP) containing reading materials (available at The College Bookstore)

\*Aldous Huxley. *Brave New World*. (HarperCollins Perennial Classics)

ISBN #0060929871. Purchase of these texts is required for all enrolled students.

**Suggestions:**

As you read, you should be considering possible points of agreement and disagreement with the writer. I expect you to attend class well-prepared and to be able to discuss any of the readings assigned up to and including the date of the class. To facilitate these goals, do the reading assignments in advance. Philosophy is difficult and requires disciplined thought. You may have to read the text several times before you have a sufficient grasp of the material. Feel free to ask informed questions during class time. Utilize my office hours to test and further your understanding of the material.

**Course Goals:**

1. To provide an introduction to philosophical thinking and to the nature of arguments.
2. To provide solid knowledge of approaches to philosophical ethics by examining the theoretical strengths and weaknesses of the main contenders in ethical theory.
3. To learn how to read, comprehend, and analyze philosophical writing.
4. To help you develop your skills to present and to criticize arguments in discussion and in writing.

## Course Requirements: 500 total course points

### In-Class Examinations

You may use a notes sheet during the exam. Notes Sheet:

Students may use **one** regular sized sheet (8 1/2 inches by 11 inches) of paper containing notes during exams. Both sides of the sheet of paper may be used if you wish. This sheet must be turned in with the complete examination in order to receive credit. If you opt **not** to use a notes sheet, you must inform me of this fact in advance of the exam.

1. Exam #1: 20% of final grade, 100 points [Scheduled: Weds. Oct.3]
2. Exam #2: 30% of final grade, 150 points [Scheduled: Fri. Nov.16]
3. Final Exam: 30% of final grade, 150 points [Scheduled: Weds. Dec. 12, 8-10 am]
4. Response Essays: 20% of final grade, 100 points total  
 These essays consist of a short writing exercise. An assignment sheet outlining the details of each essay will be distributed in class. Students will be asked to submit these questions several times during the semester. You must attend class regularly to receive this assignment and ensure that these essays are completed when due.

\*Response Essays are due in class on the due date, since their purpose is to prepare students for class. Late essays will not be accepted for credit (see "Attendance, Excused Absences" section of syllabus). Also, if any material is used in preparing these essays, it must be properly cited; review discussion of plagiarism ("Expectations") below.

### Schedule of Readings:

#### Unit I. Introduction to Argumentation and Ethical Reasoning (4 weeks)

Rachels, "What is Morality?" (XP #1)

Plato, *Euthyphro* (XP #2); \*Craig and Sinnott-Armstrong (XP#2.1)

Midgley, *Can't We Make Moral Judgments?* (XP #3)

Rachels, "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" (XP #4); Pojman (XP #5)

Feinberg, "Psychological Egoism" (XP #6)

Feldman, "Egoism: Formulation, Defense, Refutation" (XP #7)

\*Plato, "The Immoralist's Challenge" (XP #8); The Prisoner's Dilemma (XP #9)

**Unit II. Utilitarianism and Moral Value** (3-4 weeks) [*Brave New World*, Part I., chs 1-8]

Bentham (XP #10)

Mill, *Utilitarianism* (XP #10.5)

\*Williams (XP #11); Nozick (XP #11.5)

Griffin (XP #11.6); Parfit (XP #11.7); Brink (XP #11.8)

\*Railton (XP#12)

Pojman (XP #13); Dershowitz (XP #13.1)

Background (XP #13.2); Szasz (XP #13.3)

Dworkin, G. (XP #13.4)

Wilson (XP #13.5); Husak (XP #13.6)

Brock (XP #13.7)

**Unit III. Kant and Deontological/Moral Rights Theories** (3-4 weeks)

Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (XP #13.8)

Kant, *Of a Supposed Right to Lie because of Philanthropic Concerns* (XP #13.9)

Nielsen (XP #14)

Dworkin, R. (XP #14.5); Birsch (XP #15)

Singer (XP #16)

O'Neill (XP #17)

\*Arthur (XP #18)

Hardin (XP #18.1); Sachs (XP #19)

**Unit IV. Aristotle and Virtue Ethics** (3-4 weeks) [*Brave New World*, Part II., chs 9-18]

Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* (XP #18.5); Cowley (XP #20)

Frankena (XP #21); Schaller (XP #22)

Louden (XP #23)

**Video Resources:** “Is Morality Relative?” / “Does the End Justify the Means?” / Can Rules Define Morality? / “Is Ethics Based on Virtue?” / “The Whistleblower” / “Ask Why” / “The Run Coal Memos” / “The Riddle of Experience versus Memory” / “How to Buy Happiness” / “The Surprising Science of Happiness”

**Attendance, Excused Absences**

Regular class attendance is expected. Attendance will be taken daily but no punitive attendance policy *per se* is in effect. Continual tardiness will not be tolerated. One of the goals of this course is for students to understand and evaluate different perspectives on philosophical ethics. Without regular class attendance, meeting this goal is very difficult.

If an exam is going to be taken late, this should be discussed with the instructor as early as possible prior to the exam date. The following reasons will be viewed as beyond the control of the individual and consequently will not cause the grade for an assignment to be lowered:

- a. Death of a family member/or other significant person
- b. Extended hospitalization
- c. University sponsored events
- d. Jury duty/or being subpoenaed for court testimony

Appropriate, credible documentation covering the time period during which class is missed is required for these exemptions. It is your responsibility to arrange any make-up exams as soon as possible, with the option of taking the exam early being the preferred option, if possible.

Regarding religious holidays: It is the responsibility of the student to notify the faculty in writing during the first full week of the semester of their intention to be absent from class on their day(s) of religious observance if classes are held and if this causes the student to be absent on the day an assignment is due or an examination is given.

### **Late Policy**

Examinations taken late *without* a validated excuse will be subject to a late penalty: Late examinations will be marked down *one* full grade if the instructor is notified in advance that the exam will be taken late

Late examinations will be marked down *two* full grades if the instructor is not given advance notice

Proper advance notification to the instructor that an examination is going to be taken late must be given before the beginning of the class period on the exam date. This notice must either be in the form of a voicemail or an email, if the student does not speak directly with the instructor.

\*No assignments will be accepted (or make-up exams scheduled) after course work has been reviewed in class and/or handed back to the students by the instructor. All course work must be turned in by the final exam date.

### **Essay Format**

All essays should be typed or word processed, double-spaced, with a regular (12 point) font and no more than 1" margins. Please make sure your name, the number and title of the course, my name, and the date you are handing in the paper appear at the top of the first page. Do not use binders, paper clips, or any fastener other than a staple to join the pages. Your last name and page number should appear on all subsequent pages.

### **Submitting Your Essay**

Essays are due at the beginning of class on the due date. Please do not hand in essays in the Philosophy Department office. Essays are not accepted via email, unless there is some special reason for this and prior arrangements are made with the instructor. It is strongly recommended that you keep all graded work until you receive your final course grade.

### **Special Needs**

Please notify me as soon as possible of any special learning needs you may have, so that I can make reasonable accommodations. If you have a special learning need and would like more support in dealing with it, you should probably visit the Disability Services Office and find out what services are available to you. If you wish to take examinations at the Disability Services Office, you must notify me during the first week of classes so that I may make the necessary accommodations.

## **Expectations**

Appropriate behavior in class is expected. Do not distract the instructor or classmates by making noise during class. It is important that an attitude of respect for others' opinions is present at all times during class meetings. Disruptive behavior (such as interrupting others when they are speaking) will not be tolerated. Also, be courteous to the instructor and your classmates by arriving at class on time; if you need to leave class early, inform the instructor in advance. Only registered students for this class may attend; obtain prior permission from the instructor for guests. The instructor reserves the right to hold questions until the end of the class period to ensure that adequate time is available to review the material assigned for class. Please act appropriately: do not sleep, use headphones, or read the newspaper during class. Also, ensure that cellular phones or pagers will not disturb the class. No texting in class. Cellular phones are to be either turned off or set to vibrate and are to be put away in a purse, backpack, etc. Cellular phones, scientific calculators, laptop computers and other unapproved electronic devices cannot be used during examination periods. Following these common sense rules will make the course more enjoyable and more rewarding for everyone.

Do not cheat on exams or plagiarize essays, and do not lie about absences, lateness, etc. I make it a point to detect, confront, and PENALIZE academic dishonesty. Acts of plagiarism will be reported to the Associate Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, and if it is determined that a violation of intellectual integrity has occurred, academic penalties may be imposed, including the penalty of receiving a failing grade for the course. When writing essays, resist the temptation to "borrow" material located on the Internet. It is simply understood that intellectual honesty requires that you document all sources that are used to complete your course work, but for the sake of completeness, the College Policy on Cheating/Plagiarism states (in part):

"One particular form of intellectual dishonesty is plagiarism (i.e. the representation of another's words, thoughts, or ideas as one's own). While it is expected that a student who is engaged in writing will utilize information from sources other than personal experience, appropriate acknowledgment of such sources is required. Plagiarism includes:

- (1) utilizing a direct quotation without citing the source
- (2) paraphrasing the ideas, interpretation, expressions of another without giving credit;
- (3) representing the thought of others as their own by failing to acknowledge or document sources...." (Student Handbook 2005-2006, p. 95; "Intellectual Integrity").

Intellectual Integrity Statement: SUNY Oswego is committed to Intellectual Integrity. Any form of intellectual dishonesty is a serious concern and therefore prohibited. The full policy can be found at: <http://www.oswego.edu/integrity>

Learning Objectives: A. General Education (Humanities Knowledge Foundations): Students will demonstrate knowledge of the *conventions and methods* of philosophy.  
B. Philosophy Major Learning Outcomes: Students will demonstrate familiarity with the *main ideas of* historical philosophers including *Aristotle, Kant, and Mill*, including relevant ideas about ethics.

I have an open-door policy: please feel free to come by my office to discuss any concerns you have regarding this course. I reserve the right to make appropriate changes to the class readings and requirements as the course unfolds.

**Grading Scale:** (500 possible points)

A	90-100%	450-500 points
A-	88-89%	440-449 points
B+	86-87%	430-439 points
B	80-85%	400-429 points
B-	78-79%	390-399 points
C+	76-77%	380-389 points
C	70-75%	350-379 points
C-	68-69%	340-349 points
D+	66-67%	330-339 points
D	60-65%	300-329 points
D-	58-59%	290-299 points
Failing	below 58%	below 290 points

**Citations (MLA) [materials in xerox packet (XP):]**

-Author Named In Parentheses

It is said best in the following: "The prohibition on killing is certainly among the most important moral rules" (Rachels 4).

or

-Using Signal Phrase:

James Rachels wrote, "The prohibition on killing is certainly among the most important moral rules" (4).

### **Works Cited**

Rachels, James. *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*.  
Boston: McGraw-Hill, 1999. Print.

-Refer to front page of XP for bibliographic information-

### **Citations (MLA) [to books; *Brave New World*]**

-Author Named in Parentheses

It is said best in the following: “For particulars, as everyone knows, make for virtue and happiness; generalities are necessary evils” (Huxley 4).

or

-Using Signal Phrase

Aldous Huxley wrote, “For particulars, as everyone knows, make for virtue and happiness; generalities are necessary evils” (4).

### **Works Cited**

Huxley, Aldous. *Brave New World*. New York:  
HarperCollins, 1998. Print.