

PHIL 102: Ethics
University of Oregon
Fall 2014

Time & Place: MTWTR 9-9:50 204 CHA

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Office Hours: TBA

I. Course Description

All of us, in one way or another, seem to have a pretty well-developed sense of right and wrong...or at least we *think* we have something of the sort. However, on closer examination, it becomes clear that *my* conception of the good is not everyone's conception of the good. The realization of this fact is can be a jarring event, and tempt us towards the equally unappetizing positions of moral skepticism and moral relativism. In this course, we'll work towards mitigating this tension with a careful examination of both classical and contemporary issues in moral philosophy, aimed at building ourselves a sort of "toolbox," for dealing with ethical quandaries firsthand. To that end, we'll consider questions of agency, examine the meaning of ethical terms, look at how ethical theories are grounded and applied, and how philosophical ethics can be brought to bear on ethical issues we might confront in our everyday life.

Ia. Course Objectives:

By the end of this course, you will be able to:

- Engage philosophically rich readings in a close, critical manner
- Be able to critically assess ethical theories in light of contemporary ethical issues
- Have a broad understanding of both the classical and contemporary literature in ethics
- Plan and write an argumentative essay.

II. Texts

Required On First Day of Class:

Shafer-Landau, Russ. *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Moral Problems*. 2nd Edition (New York: OUP, 2011) ISBN 9780199773527. **Noted in Schedule of Readings by ***

Shafer-Landau, Russ. *Fundamentals of Ethics*. 2nd Edition (New York: OUP, 2011) ISBN 9780199773558. **Noted in Schedule of Readings by #**

III. Pedagogy

A. Reading: In order for you to benefit fully from class lectures and discussion, readings must be completed *before* the class period in which they are to be discussed. Reading assignments may be difficult, but they are usually short enough so that you should be able read them *at least* twice. **Please note that the schedule of readings and assignments is subject to change at my discretion.** Also note that the schedule of

readings and assignments will most likely change as discussions tend to become more involved as the semester progresses and this can slow the pace of the reading schedule. So if you miss class, be sure to keep up with any changes in readings or assignments. Not knowing about a change in the reading schedule because you missed class is not an excuse.

B. Writing: Writing is one of the ways you do philosophy. To that end, we will be doing a fair bit of writing in this class. There will be a 4 to 5-page (min. 1000 words, max. 1200 words) paper assignment **due at the end of each unit**. Late papers will not be accepted without a documented excuse. The paper assignments will be of two types:

- 1.) You will be assigned a specific claim from one of the readings and you will be asked to attack or defend that claim.
- 2.) You will be assigned an ethical issue posed by a current event and you will be asked to assess this event in light of the readings for that week.

In addition, there will be a final paper, due on the day of the final exam. Guidelines for this paper will be handed out in Week 4. Papers must be submitted via hard copy and are **due at the beginning of class on the day they are due**. You should note that these papers represent the bulk of your grade.

C. Class Participation and Attendance

Most of us are inclined to think of argument in terms of a *Jersey Shore*-style screaming match, but for philosophers, "argument" has a technical meaning, one that denotes both a technical term and a professional practice. We will be doing some arguing in this class, hopefully with one another. I want you to engage these texts critically and be willing to debate their relative merits and shortcomings. To that end, I expect you to come to class ready to engage in a dialogue about the assigned text. You should note that you will be **graded both on the quality and quantity** of your participation. Please also note that attendance is a portion of your grade. You may choose whether or not you want those points, but please note that the loss of attendance points is often accompanied by a loss of points in other, more significant, areas.

Note on electronics: unless you have a documented need for the device, it cannot be used in class. As a gesture of mutual respect, we will communally silence our phones before each class.

D. Quizzes

There will be reading quizzes given at my discretion on certain class days. These quizzes will occur at the beginning of the class period. There are no makeup quizzes

E. Grade Breakdown Grading Standards, and Academic Honesty

1.) The grading breakdown is as follows (1000 pts possible):

Papers: 60%
Quizzes: 20%
Class Part.: 10%
Attendance: 10%

What kind of paper deserves an “A,” “B,” etc.? The following rubric reflects the general standards of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon.

A = excellent. No mistakes, well-written, and distinctive in some way or other.

B = good. No significant mistakes, well-written, but not distinctive in any way.

C = OK. Some errors, but a basic grasp of the material.

D = poor. Several errors. A tenuous grasp of the material.

F = failing. Problematic on all fronts indicating either no real grasp of the material or a complete lack of effort.

Please note: what counts as “excellent” or “OK,” for example, depends in part upon the nature and level of the class in question.

Exam / Paper Grading Scale:

92% or above A

90-92% A- 73-76%

87-89% B+ 70-72% C-

83-86% B 67-69% D+

80-82% B- 63-66% D

77-79% C+ 60-62% D-

0-59% F

Students registered with the P/NP grading option must receive at least 70% in order to receive a P.

2.) Document Retention: Please retain all graded work from this course until you have received your final grade. This will aid both your writing process and my failing memory.

3.) Academic Honesty

If you only read one part of this syllabus, let it be this one. I take the issue of academic honesty very seriously, and I have two things to say

- i.) It's stealing. So don't do it.
- ii.) It ain't hard to tell. This is not a challenge, it is a truth.

If you are caught in an act of academic dishonesty, you will receive an “F” for the course. Such acts include:

Plagiarism: *Plagiarism is the inclusion of someone else's product, words, ideas, or data as one's own work. When a student submits work for credit that includes the product, words, ideas, or data of others, the source must be acknowledged by the use of complete, accurate, and specific references, such as footnotes. By placing one's name on work submitted for credit, one certifies the originality of all work not otherwise identified by appropriate acknowledgements. Verbatim statements by others must be enclosed by quotation marks or set off from the regular text as indented extracts. Students will avoid being charged with plagiarism if there is acknowledgement of indebtedness. Indebtedness must be acknowledged whenever:*

- 1) one quotes another person's actual words or replicates all or part of another's product;
- 2) one uses another person's ideas, opinions, work, data, or theories, even if they are completely paraphrased in one's own words;
- 3) one borrows facts, statistics, or other illustrative material—unless the information is common knowledge.

Unauthorized collaboration with others on papers or projects can inadvertently lead to a charge of plagiarism. If in doubt, consult the instructor or seek assistance from the staff of Academic Learning Services (68 PLC, 346-3226). In addition, it is plagiarism to submit as your own any academic exercise prepared totally or in part by another person, even if that person is acting as a tutor or

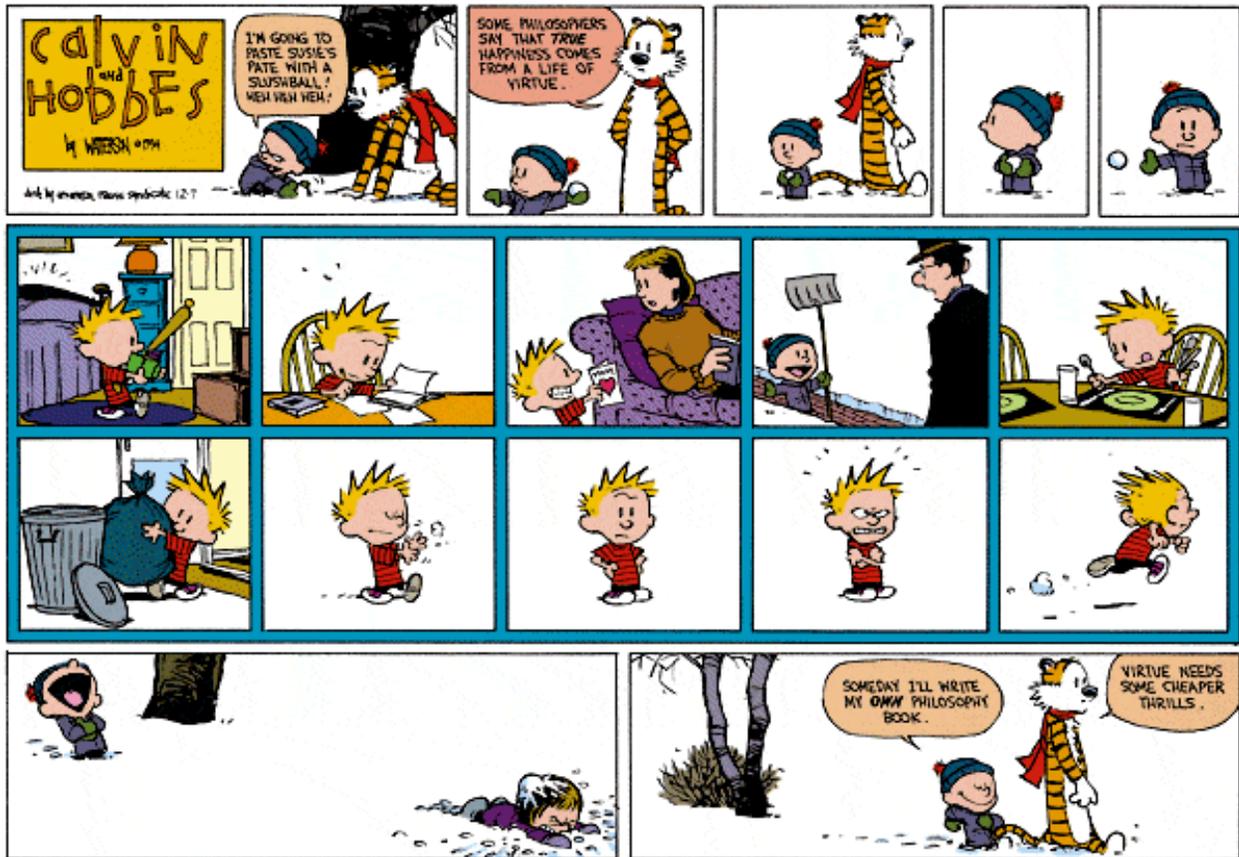
editor (and ends up substantially producing part of the work).

Fabrication: Fabrication is the intentional use of information that the author has invented when he or she states or implies otherwise, or the falsification of research or other findings with the intent to deceive. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- 1) citing information not taken from the source indicated;
- 2) listing sources in a reference not used in the academic exercise;
- 3) inventing data or source information for research or other academic exercises.

Cheating: Cheating is an act of deception by which a student misrepresents or misleadingly demonstrates that he or she has mastered information on an academic exercise that he or she has not mastered, including the giving or receiving of unauthorized help in an academic exercise.

Examples include but are not limited to: 1) copying from another student's work; 2) collaborating without authority or allowing another student to copy one's work in a test situation; 3) using the course textbook or other material not authorized for use during a test; 4) using unauthorized material during a test; for example, notes, formula lists, cues on a computer, photographs, symbolic representations, and notes written on clothing; 5) resubmitting substantially the same work that was produced for another assignment without the knowledge and permission of the instructor; 6) taking a test for someone else or permitting someone else to take a test for you.



F. Tentative Schedule of Readings (Remember: *=Yellow Book, #= Blue Book)

Unit 1—Livin' the Dream: Morality and the Good Life

9/30-- Introduction/Syllabus/Video Clip from *The Wire*: "Omar Testifies"
--Shafer-Landau, "Introduction" #

10/1-- Epicurus "Letter to Menoecus" & J.S. Mill "Hedonism"*

10/2--Shafer-Landau, "Hedonism: It's Powerful Appeal" #

10/3-- Aldous Huxley *Brave New World* & Robert Nozick "The Experience Machine" *

10/7--Shafer-Landau, "Is Happiness All That Matters?" #

10/8-- Richard Taylor "The Meaning of Life" & Jean Kazez "Necessities"*

10/9--Shafer-Landau, "Getting What You Want" # **Paper 1 Topic Assigned**

10/10-- Plato, *Euthyphro*, Phillipa Foot "Natural Goodness"*

10/14--Shafer-Landau, "Morality & Religion," "Natural Law" # **PAPER 1 DUE**

Unit 2—What Ought We to Do?: Normative Ethics

10/15-- J.J.C. Smart "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism"*

10/16--Shafer-Landau "Ethical Egoism," "Consequentialism" #

10/17-- Kant "The Good Will and the Categorical Imperative"*

10/21--Shafer-Landau "The Kantian Perspective" #

10/22--Hobbes *Leviathan**

10/23--Shafer-Landau "The Social Contract Tradition" #

10/24--Aristotle *Nicomachean Ethics** **Final Paper Guidelines Handed Out.**

10/28--Shafer-Landau "Ethical Pluralism," "Virtue Ethics" #

10/29--Lindemann "What is Feminist Ethics?"* **Paper 2 Topic Assigned**
Shafer-Landau "Feminist Ethics" #



Unit 3—What's It All About, Then?: Metaethics and Meaning

10/30--Hume "Moral Distinctions Not Deriv'd From Reason" **PAPER 2 DUE**

10/31-- Ayer "A Critique of Ethics"*

11/4--Shafer-Landau "Moral Nihilism" #

11/5-- Mackie "The Subjectivity of Values," Gensler "Cultural Relativism"*

11/6--Shafer-Landau "Ethical Relativism" #

11/7--Rachels "The Challenge of Cultural Relativism" (will be provided via email)

11/11--Shafer-Landau "Ethical Relativism" cont'd.

11/12--Smith "Realism"*

11/13--Shafer-Landau "Ten Arguments Against Moral Objectivity" #

11/14--Bambrough "Proof"*

11/18--Shafer-Landau "Ten Arguments..." cont'd # **Paper 3 Topic Assigned**

Unit 4—Feeling Where the Shoe Pinches: Applied Ethics

11/19--Singer "The Singer Solution to World Poverty" **PAPER 3 DUE**

11/20--Bennett "The Conscience of Huck Finn"*

11/21--Corvino "Why Shouldn't Tommy and Jimmy Have Sex? A Defense of Homosexuality"*

11/25--Finnis "The Wrong of Homosexuality" (will be provided via email)

11/26--King, Jr. "Letter From a Birmingham Jail," Huemer, "America's Unjust Drug War"*

11/27-- Taylor "The Ethics of Respect for Nature"

11/28-- NO CLASS THANKSGIVING BREAK

Unit 5—Quodlibetal Questions/Peer Review/Movie

12/1--Final paper topic peer review

12/2--*The House I Live In*

12/3--*The House I Live In*

12/4--Final paper topic peer review

FINAL PAPER DUE Dec. 10, by 3 p.m. in my office.

