

Philosophy 202 Sections 1, 2, & 5: Ethics (Fall 2016)

Syllabus

Class Days / Times:

Section 1: 10:00–10:50 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays in NQ 143

Section 2: 11:00–11:50 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays in NQ 078

Section 5: 2:00–2:50 p.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, & Fridays in NQ 039

Professor: Dr. Rachel Fredericks

I prefer that you simply call me by my first name, Rachel, but if it makes you more comfortable, you may call me Professor or Doctor (please, not Mrs. or Miss) Fredericks.

Email Address: rlfredericks@bsu.edu

I prefer communicating by email, not telephone, and I can usually respond to emails within 24 hours during the week and 48 hours on the weekend.

Office Hours:

Monday 12:00–2:00 p.m., Wednesday 3:00–4:00 p.m., & by appointment

Office Location: North Quad (NQ) 230

Office Phone: 285-1261

Please stop by for office hours, which are a great chance for us to get to know each other better and to have a conversation about philosophy! Office hours can be incredibly helpful, whether you are struggling and want extra help or you are curious and looking to go beyond the requirements of the class.

Course Description

What does a good life look like? What makes some actions morally right and others morally wrong? What kind of person should I be? WHY? How do I figure out the answers to questions like these? These are the kinds of questions that we try to answer as students of ethics: questions about moral values.

These questions do not have easy, obvious answers that all the experts already agree on. We have to use our own judgment to evaluate the reasons that support different answers and decide for ourselves which are the best ones. So this is a challenging course! But the good news is that the payoff is potentially enormous: a course like this is great for helping you develop your critical thinking skills (which are extremely useful both in school and the “real world”) and can help you make informed decisions for yourself about what makes life good, why, and how to live as you think people should.

I am here to help you do your best work and get the most out your experience in this class. More specifically, my job as your ethics professor includes:

- Helping you understand a variety of views (theories) about ethics and (especially) the reasons WHY people accept / reject them
 - While you are never required to agree with any particular ethical view that we read about, you are expected to gain an understanding of what philosophers have said about those views and why, so that your own views about ethics will become more informed.
- Showing you the methods that philosophers use to make and evaluate arguments
 - Our methods include ways of reading, conversing, and writing that will probably be somewhat unfamiliar if this is your first philosophy class.
- Designing guided opportunities for you to practice your philosophical skills on your own and in collaboration with others
 - Some of those skills include:
 - Defining terms clearly
 - Distinguishing between similar ideas
 - Making, explaining, evaluating, defending, & criticizing arguments
 - Asking critical questions
 - Applying abstract ideas to concrete situations
- Giving you feedback about your progress and ideas about how to improve in developing your philosophical skills and your understanding of course content

Your job as a student includes:

- Preparing yourself for class by carefully reading the assigned texts before class
- Making a good faith effort to understand others' views about ethics and develop your philosophical skills by engaging with the texts, your classmates, and me
- Sharing and defending your own views by giving reasons in support of them (during class discussion and in writing)
- Showing respect for people whether they agree or disagree with you and being open to the possibility of changing your mind if you are given a good argument

To be perfectly honest, students in their first philosophy class often find it more difficult than they expected. But it is normal to be challenged when you try something new, and you shouldn't feel badly about yourself just because there is a learning curve for new things. Be kind to yourself, and you'll be more likely to stick with it and do the work needed to succeed in this course. You should also know that we build our philosophical skills step-by-step through lots of practice, so students do tend to improve a lot in one term. So don't get discouraged if things get tough – *please* just ask for help (sooner rather than later)! I am here for you and I believe in you! ☺

Required Book

Shafer-Landau, Russ. *The Fundamentals of Ethics*. 3rd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

- All the readings on the schedule are required unless marked as recommended.
- Required readings not from the textbook are posted on Blackboard & are marked on the schedule with a *.
- Always do the assigned reading before class on the day listed.
- Always bring a copy (paper or digital) of the reading with you to class.

Recommended Books

Graff, Gerald, and Cathy Birkenstein. *They Say, I Say: The Moves that Matter in Persuasive Writing*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2007.

Weston, Anthony. *A Rulebook for Arguments*. 4th ed. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2009.

More recommended readings will be available via Blackboard. Some of them are meant to help you draw connections between the required material and things going on in real time outside the classroom, others to help you catch up or keep up if you are struggling, and others to give you an extra challenge if you want it.

Schedule

All groups of students have different interests, needs, and talents, so I might make changes to this schedule (though I do that as little as possible & give as much warning as possible if / when I do).

Week 1: INTRO

8/22: Syllabus* (the star, here and below, means that it is posted on Blackboard)

8/24: Tania Lombrozo, "Why We Need Philosophers Engaged in Public Life"*

8/26: Shafer-Landau, *Fundamentals of Ethics*, pp. 1-5 AND "Reading Responses"*

Week 2 [reading response due this week]

8/29: Shafer-Landau, pp. 5-10

8/31: Shafer-Landau, pp. 10-15

9/2: Shafer-Landau, pp. 15-19

Week 3: HEDONISM

9/5: LABOR DAY: NO CLASSES (have fun!)

9/7: Shafer-Landau, pp. 23-27

9/9: Shafer-Landau, pp. 27-31

Week 4

9/12: Shafer-Landau, pp. 31-36

9/14: Shafer-Landau, pp. 36-43

9/16: TBD

Week 5: DESIRE SATISFACTION **[reading response due this week]**

9/19: Shafer-Landau, pp. 44-50

9/21: Shafer-Landau, pp. 51-55

9/23: Shafer-Landau, pp. 55-60

Week 6: MORALITY & RELIGION

9/26: TBD

9/28: Shafer-Landau, pp. 63-68

9/30: Shafer-Landau, pp. 69-75

Week 7: CONSEQUENTIALISM **[reading response due this week]**

10/3: Shafer-Landau, pp. 119-123

10/5: Shafer-Landau, pp. 123-130

10/7: Shafer-Landau, pp. 130-137

Week 8

10/10: FALL BREAK: NO CLASSES (have fun!)

10/12: Shafer-Landau, pp. 138-143

10/14: Shafer-Landau, pp. 143-149

Week 9: KANTIANISM

10/17: Shafer-Landau, pp. 149-153

10/19: TBD

10/21: Shafer-Landau, pp. 159-165

Week 10 **[reading response due this week]**

10/24: Shafer-Landau, pp. 165-170

10/26: Shafer-Landau, pp. 170-174

10/28: Shafer-Landau, pp. 174-180

Week 11

10/31: Shafer-Landau, pp. 181-186

11/2: Shafer-Landau, pp. 186-191

11/4: TBD

Week 12: VIRTUE ETHICS **[reading response due this week]**

11/7: Shafer-Landau, pp. 254-258

11/8: ELECTION DAY: Time to vote!

11/9: Shafer-Landau, pp. 259-263

11/11: Shafer-Landau, pp. 263-269

Week 13: FEMINIST ETHICS **[reading response due this week]**

11/14: Shafer-Landau, pp. 269-273

11/16: Shafer-Landau, pp. 274-280

11/18: Shafer-Landau, pp. 280-285

Week 14

11/21: Shafer-Landau, pp. 285-288

11/23-25: THANKSGIVING: NO CLASSES (have fun!)

Week 15: STUDENTS' CHOICE **[reading response due this week]**

From here on, we'll read what you choose by voting on options that I provide.

11/28: Students' Choice: TBD

11/30: Students' Choice: TBD

12/2: Students' Choice: TBD

Week 16

12/5: Students' Choice: TBD

12/7: Students' Choice: TBD

12/9: Students' Choice: TBD

Week 17

12/12: Review Session

Final Exam

Section 1: 9:45–11:45 a.m. on Wednesday, 12/14, in our regular location, NQ 143

Section 2: 9:45–11:45 a.m. on Thursday, 12/15, in our regular location, NQ 078

Section 5: 2:15–4:15 p.m. on Thursday, 12/15, in our regular location, NQ 039

Assignments & Assessment

Your final grade will be based on:

- Participation: 20 points
- Reading responses: 70 points (10 each)
- In-class assignments and other homework: 60 points
- Final exam: 50 points
- Total: 200 points

All assignments (other than those completed during class):

- Need to be typed (double-spaced) and submitted (as attachments) electronically via Blackboard
- Must include appropriate citations for all quotations *and paraphrases*, plus a complete list of bibliographic references at the end.
 - Please use the MLA style guide to format your citations and references.
 - You do not need to put the Works Cited section on a separate page.
 - Please do provide the URL for any sources found on the Internet.
- Will be processed using SafeAssign, a plagiarism-detecting technology
- Will be given grades & comments electronically, via Blackboard
- Will be graded anonymously, so please don't write your name on them.
 - Empirical research shows that people have implicit (unconscious) biases, even if they are strongly committed to equality, fairness, and so on. Thankfully, we can do things to minimize the effects of implicit bias, and anonymous grading is an easy and effective one.

Attendance and active participation in class discussions are crucial to success in mastering the course material and developing your skills. So I expect you to come to class with informed questions and opinions about the relevant readings. I will keep track of attendance, but that is only one factor that I take into account in determining your participation grade. The quality and quantity of your contributions to discussion will be the main basis for your participation grade, but participation in office hours, email exchanges with me, and communication via note cards will also be factored in.

A significant part of your grade is determined by homework assignments and reading responses, which are due BEFORE class. This is for two main reasons: (1) to give you an extra incentive to do the required reading before class and so come to class prepared for discussion and (2) to give you practice thinking about philosophical issues independently (instead of just writing out what someone else said during class).

Late homework will not be accepted for credit unless (a) you and I agree upon an alternate arrangement ahead of time, which requires planning and good reasons on your part, or (b) in case of a documented emergency beyond your control, in which case, you need to contact me *as soon as possible*. Similarly, if you miss class on a day that we do an in class activity for credit, you miss the opportunity to earn credit for that activity, unless you've made arrangements with me ahead of time or show me appropriate documentation to excuse your absence.

However, I recognize that *occasionally* people have a good reason for not attending class or completing an assignment on time. So I assign *at least* 65 points worth of homework and in class assignments (in addition to the reading responses), but I calculate grades as though there were only 60 points possible from that kind of assignment. That way, if you forget or botch an assignment or two, you can still get a high score overall. It also means that it is possible to earn more than 100% of the available homework points, since if you do an excellent job on all of them, you will effectively get a bonus. This is the only form of extra credit available.

The schema below is how I will convert your final total of points into a letter grade. Grades will not be rounded up, nor curved.

If you want to calculate your grade midway through the term, take your total points (listed in Blackboard), and divide that number by the total points possible on all the assignments so far (you'll have to do the addition yourself, since different people will be turning in reading responses at different times, which means that Blackboard won't always calculate this one correctly for you), then compare the resulting percentage to this schema.

A = 95% = 190 points
A- = 90% = 180 points
B+ = 87% = 174 points
B = 83% = 166 points
B- = 80% = 160 points
C+ = 77% = 154 points

C = 73% = 146 points
C- = 70% = 140 points
D+ = 67% = 134 points
D = 63% = 126 points
D- = 60% = 120 points
F = <60% = ≤119 points

In general, written assignments will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

1. Structure and Organization
 - a. Is the assignment well organized?
 - b. Does it have a clear thesis statement in the first person?
 - c. Are there clear transitions between paragraphs and sections of the assignment?

2. Exposition and Interpretation
 - a. Do you give a clear, accurate, and charitable interpretation of the view(s) considered?
 - b. Do you make clear the underlying assumptions of the view(s) and their implications?
 - c. Do you support your interpretations with relevant citations to the text?
3. Argument and Critical Evaluation
 - a. Do you give rational arguments for the claims you make? Is it obvious what they are?
 - b. When critiquing a view, do you consider possible responses to that critique?
 - c. Do you show that you have thought independently about the problem in question?
4. Writing Style
 - a. Is your prose style clear and easy to understand?
 - b. Are there any recurring grammatical or spelling errors?
 - c. Do you avoid awkward and confusing sentence structures?

The Writing Center

One key to improving your writing is getting feedback during the writing process. The Writing Center at Ball State offers free writing feedback sessions (online or face-to-face) to all students. They work with students on essays, reports, reflections, research projects, web content, lesson plans, slideshows, poster presentations, resumes, and other digital or print texts. You can make an appointment by going to www.bsu.edu/writingcenter, stopping by Robert Bell 295, or calling 765-285-8370.

The Learning Center

Did you know that the Learning Center offers free tutoring for many courses, including science and humanities, languages, math and business, help with any writing task, and study strategies, including time management, test taking, note taking, and effective textbook reading?

The Learning Center opens for Fall 2016 tutoring on Monday, August 29th, at 9 am. Hours are Monday–Thursday, 9 am–8 pm, and Friday, 9 am–12 pm. Call 765-285-3780 or visit NQ 350 to make an appointment to meet with a tutor, or check them out online at <http://www.bsu.edu/learningcenter>. They can help!

Student Conduct

A respectful, civil environment is crucial for learning any subject, but especially so for philosophy, which involves questioning, defending, and criticizing the beliefs and practices that mean the most to us. Conduct that interferes with other students' ability to learn or my ability to teach is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. In particular, students should not interrupt others; dominate class discussion; disparage or disrespect the ideas, beliefs, or practices of others (which does not mean that one cannot or should not respectfully provide reasons to disagree about them); habitually arrive late or leave early; make or receive phone calls; text; surf the internet; or use other technology that is not directly related to course goals.

Academic Dishonesty

Academically honest students do not use others' ideas or words without formally acknowledging the author or source through appropriate use of quotation marks, references, and the like. Plagiarism, a form of academic *dishonesty*, is presenting someone else's work or thought as one's own original work or thought. If I discover that a student has plagiarized, cheated, or otherwise violated the academic dishonesty policy, the student will receive a score of zero for the assignment, and if the violation is sufficiently significant, may fail the course as whole, at the professor's discretion.

More resources relating to academic dishonesty and how to avoid it are posted on Blackboard. If, after consulting those resources, you have questions, please contact me *as soon as possible*. It is much better for everyone if you get help clearing up any confusion right away, rather than waiting and needing to deal with a bigger problem.

Disability Accommodations

If you need course adaptations or accommodations because of a disability, please contact me as soon as possible. Ball State's Disability Services office coordinates services for students with disabilities; documentation of a disability needs to be on file in that office before any accommodations can be provided. Disability Services can be contacted at 765-285-5293 or dsd@bsu.edu.

Concerns or Problems

If you have a concern or problem about the course, please contact me ASAP so we can work together on the best possible plan for moving forward! ☺