

# INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS

PHL 110  
Highlands College  
Autumn 2016

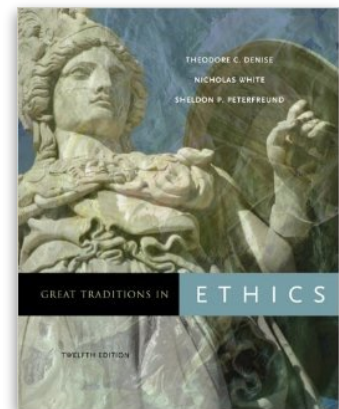
Classroom: 112  
Office Hours: By appointment

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Ethics is a branch of philosophy concerned with morality. As such, it asks some of the most difficult questions pertaining to the human experience. What does it mean to act morally? Why should we be good? How should we live? This course is designed mainly as a survey of influential responses to these questions from thinkers of the Western canon and, second, as an introduction to applied ethics. In this way, once we have a solid grasp of the ethical lineage from Plato up to the present, we'll spend the final few weeks of the semester discussing a series of controversial moral issues including abortion, pornography, animals rights, hunting, drone strikes, and global economic justice.

## Required Texts:

- ▶ Theodore C. Denise, Nicholas P. White, Sheldon P. Peterfreund, eds.  
*Great Traditions in Ethics*, 12th edition (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2008).
- Additional readings will be provided via Moodle.



College-level work requires a commitment to read and contemplate the assigned material on your own in advance so that we can have a meaningful discussion in class. Philosophy, like other fields of study in the humanities, thrives on discussion and active engagement. This means that regular attendance and participation is absolutely critical to your success.

## Course Requirements

### *Attendance & Participation - 15%*

Attendance is not optional. Each student will be permitted no more than one absence before it begins to negatively impact his or her attendance grade. I do not need to know the circumstances behind your absence. We are all adults and it's none of my business why you cannot make it class on a particular day, but it might be a good idea to save your absences for sick days or emergencies, etc. Six absences or more will result in immediate failure of the course, no matter why you were not present. That said, I offer a small bonus to those who manage to attend every single class:

0 absences: 120%  
1 absence: 100%  
2 absences: 80%

3 absences: 60%  
4 absences: 40%  
5 absences: 20%  
6 absences: Immediate failure

You are expected to participate in classroom discussions. In order to do this effectively, you must have completed all of the assigned reading beforehand. I will also activate a discussion forum on Moodle, where you will be free to post about current events and issues that relate to the course in some way. This will also count as participation credit.

#### *Mock Interview - 15%*

You will choose a philosopher with whom to conduct an imaginary interview. We will discuss the details of this assignment in class, but it is worth beginning to think about which theorist you would like to learn more about. The interview will be approximately 1300-1400 words long and should cover the broad issues with which the thinker's work is concerned, as well as any ancillary topics of interest.

This assignment demands a rigorous familiarity with your chosen theorist's work and you may wish to consult biographies or secondary literature, citing any pertinent content in the course of the interview. The interview must be conceptual—NOT biographical—and must include a bibliography.

#### *Reading Responses - 20%*

Each week, you will submit a 300-word response to a question relating to one of the week's assigned philosophers. All of these questions will be available on Moodle. Whichever question you choose, your response will be due by 9.00 AM on the day of class devoted to the philosopher in question. For the week of August 25 and September 1, for example, we will read Plato and Aristotle respectively. You must respond to one or the other.

#### *Written Exams - 25% x 2*

The two take-home, typed exams will each consist of five essay questions, of which you will respond to any two. Each response must be no less than two pages double-spaced. These exams will be automatically posted to Moodle and you will have one week to complete and upload them.

Written Exam #1: Available from October 6th until October 13th, 11.59 PM

Written Exam #2: Available from December 6th until December 16th, 11.59 PM

Your exam responses will be graded according to the following criteria: faithful and accurate representation of the material; the intellectual rigor and soundness of your argument; spelling, grammar, and style. Under no circumstances will late exams be accepted and I do not offer make-ups. Be sure to plan accordingly.

## Grading

Your final grade will be weighed as follows:

Attendance & Participation:	15%
Mock Interview:	15%
Reading Responses:	20%
Written Exam #1:	25%
Written Exam #2:	25%

Grades will be posted to Moodle as they become available. Please do not ask me how you are doing in the course without first checking there.

## Course Policies

### *Office Hours*

I encourage you to take advantage of my time! Experience shows that students who meet with me do much better than those who do not exploit the opportunity. Some reasons you might want to speak with me: if you're having difficulty keeping up with the class; if you don't understand the concepts and need help; if you want to clarify my expectations for an assignment or an exam; if you want to discuss the results of an assignment or an exam; if you want to express a concern of any kind; or if you just want to talk about ethics and life in general, come see me!

Please note, email is no substitute for personal interaction. Too many students seem to think I sit at my computer all day just waiting to respond to questions already addressed in the syllabus. Unless you are writing to tell me that Moodle is not working correctly or that you can't access an assigned reading—save it for a face-to-face discussion.

### *Classroom Conduct*

Some of the issues covered in this course may be closely intertwined with deep-seated political, religious, and/or cultural beliefs. I enjoy a lively classroom discussion, but it must always be conducted in a respectful manner, free of invective, and conscious of what may be profound differences of opinion. Our discussions will allow all views a hearing, but I will not allow any one student to monopolize class time.

- I do not allow eating in class, but non-alcoholic drinks are fine.
- I do not allow laptop computers, tablets, or cell phones to be used in class. If I see you texting, I will mark a half-absence for the day.
- Sleeping in class is totally unacceptable. If you need to sleep, don't come to class. You will be marked absent in either case.

- Lateness is unacceptable. I understand that one might occasionally face unforeseen delays, but there is no excuse for routine lateness. If the door is shut when you arrive, it means you're more than fifteen minutes late and I've already marked you absent for the day.
- Leaving class early will also count against your attendance grade.

### *Plagiarism*

Plagiarism is academic fraud. Any student caught plagiarizing will immediately fail the course and have their case turned over to the college administration for further investigation.

Your work must be your own, *without exception*. Use footnotes or parenthetical citations to give credit for direct quotes, paraphrased sentences, or borrowed ideas. Memorizing passages from the internet or any other sources and then regurgitating it verbatim is plagiarism.

You can also see [plagiarism.org](http://plagiarism.org) for more detailed information.

If you are still unsure about what plagiarism means, come speak with me as soon as possible.

“A student will be considered guilty of academic dishonesty [plagiarism] if he/she submits a term paper, essay, speech, laboratory report, or other assignment in which all or part of the words or ideas are copied from the published or unpublished work of another individual without giving the original author proper credit for the words or ideas.”

## COURSE PLAN

Aug. 23      **Introduction: Why Be Good?**

### CLASSICAL ETHICAL TRADITIONS

Aug. 25      **Ethics Without God**

- Plato, *Euthyphro*

Aug. 30      **Knowledge & Virtue**

- ▶ Plato, selections from *Gorgias*; *The Republic* (ch. 2)

Sept. 1      **Moral Character**

- ▶ Aristotle, selections from *Nicomachean Ethics* (ch. 3)

Sept. 6      **The Pleasant Life**

- ▶ Epicurus, selections from *To Herodotus*; *To Menoeceus*; *Principal Doctrines*; *Fragments* (ch. 4)

Sept. 8      **Self-Discipline**

- ▶ Epictetus, selections from *The Discourses*; *Enchiridion*; *Fragments* (ch. 5)

Sept. 13     **The Love of God**

- ▶ St. Augustine, selections from *Enchiridion*; *City of God* (ch. 6)

Sept. 15     **Morality & Natural Law**

- ▶ St. Thomas Aquinas, selections from *Summa Contra Gentiles*; *Summa Theologica* (ch. 7)

Sept. 20     **Social Contract Ethics**

- ▶ Thomas Hobbes, selections from *Leviathan*; *Philosophical Rudiments* (ch. 8)

Sept. 22     **Morality & Sentiment**

- ▶ David Hume, selections from *An Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* (ch. 11)

Sept. 27     **Duty and Reason**

- ▶ Immanuel Kant, selections from *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals* (ch. 12)

Sept. 29     **The Greatest Happiness Principle**

- ▶ John Stuart Mill, selections from *Utilitarianism* (ch. 13)

## MODERN CONTINUATIONS & CRITIQUES

- Oct. 4      **The Leap of Faith**  
    ▶ Søren Kierkegaard, selections from *Either/Or; Fear and Trembling; Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (ch. 14)
- Oct. 6      **NO CLASS**  
    ★ WRITTEN EXAM GOES ONLINE at 9.00 AM
- Oct. 11     **Morality as Ideology**  
    ▶ Karl Marx, selections from *The German Ideology; The Economical and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844; Capital, v. I* (ch. 15)
- Oct. 13     **The Transvaluation of Values**  
    ▶ Friedrich Nietzsche, selections from *The Will To Power; The Genealogy of Morals; Beyond Good and Evil* (ch. 17)  
    ★ WRITTEN EXAM DUE ONLINE by 11.59 PM
- Oct. 18     **The Scientific Method in Ethics**  
    ▶ John Dewey, selections from *The Quest for Certainty* (ch.18)
- Oct. 20     **Radical Freedom**  
    ▶ Jean-Paul Sartre, selections from *Existentialism; and Human Emotions* (ch. 22)
- Oct. 25     **Moral Attention**  
    ◎ Iris Murdoch, “The Sovereignty of Good Over Other Concepts”
- Oct. 27     **Ethics and Social Justice**  
    ▶ John Rawls, selections from “Justice as Reciprocity” (ch. 24)
- Nov. 1      **Moral Virtue & Human Interest**  
    ▶ Philippa Foot, selections from *Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (ch. 25)
- Nov. 3      **Trusting in Trust**  
    ▶ Annette Baier, selections from *Trust and Anti-Trust* (ch. 26)
- Nov. 8      **ELECTION DAY - NO CLASS**  
    EXTRA CREDIT  
    ◎ Jason Brennan, selections from *The Ethics of Voting*
- Nov. 10     **Ethical Skepticism**  
    ▶ Bernard Williams, selections from *Morality* (ch. 28)

## APPLIED ETHICS

- Nov. 15      **Abortion**
- Judith Jarvis Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion”
  - Don Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral”
- Nov. 17      **Pornography**
- Wendy Kaminer, “Feminists Against the First Amendment”
  - Susan J. Brison, “‘The Price We Pay?’ Pornography and Harm”
- Nov. 22      **Animal Rights**
- Tom Regan, “The Case for Animal Rights”
  - Mary Anne Warren, “Difficulties With the Strong Animal Rights Position”
    - ★ WRITTEN EXAM DUE ONLINE by 11.59 PM
- Nov. 24      **THANKSGIVING - NO CLASS**  
**EXTRA CREDIT**
- David Foster Wallace, “Consider the Lobster”
- Nov. 29      **Hunting**
- Theodore Vitali, “But They Can’t Shoot Back: What Makes Fair Chase Fair?”
  - Lisa Kretz, “A Shot in the Dark: The Dubious Prospects of Environmental Hunting”
- Dec. 1        **Drone Strikes**
- Uwe Steinhoff, “Killing Them Safely: Extreme Asymmetry and Its Discontents”
- Dec. 6        **Global Economic Justice**
- Robert Nozick, “The Entitlement Theory of Justice”
  - Peter Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”
    - ★ WRITTEN EXAM GOES ONLINE at 9.00 AM
- Dec. 13      **NO CLASS**
- ★ WRITTEN EXAM DUE ONLINE by 11.59 PM

## KEY

- ▶ Reading from the textbook.
- Reading available on Moodle.
- ★ Exams and other assignments.