

# PHIL 102 – ETHICS

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## Instructor

Bonnie Sheehey

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Office Hours: Mon. 12-2pm

Susan Campbell Hall 161

## Course Meetings

Summer 2018

MTWR – 10-11:50AM

Gerlinger 246

## Course Description

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that considers questions of right action, moral values, and how one might live responsibly in a world with others. Of the many branches in philosophy, ethics has the peculiar feature of being directly concerned with both theory and practice, evaluation and exercise. Ethics does not content itself with asking basic *what* questions like “What ought I do?” or “What is the good?” It also addresses the important *how* questions – “How should we live?” or “How might we cope?”

Focusing on both the **what** and the **how** questions, this course will begin with a survey of classical ethical theories, beginning with Aristotle’s virtue ethics, Immanuel Kant’s deontological ethics, and John Stuart Mill’s utilitarianism, before turning to critiques of traditional moral theory in the work of Friedrich Nietzsche, William James, and Carol Gilligan. From here we will consider alternative contemporary approaches to ethics that are attentive to questions of affect, power, and ambiguity through the work of Simone de Beauvoir, MLK, Angela Davis, and James Baldwin.

## Course Objectives

Because philosophy can be quite difficult and challenging, a few critical tools and intellectual virtues are needed to aid the thinker. Our critical toolkit will include questions that call for clarification, examples, counter-examples, reasons and justifications, and implications of what we are discussing. Intellectual virtues include generosity and openness, thoroughness and rigor, curiosity, courage, and responsive listening. It is hoped that by the end of this course, the student will incorporate these critical tools and virtues in addition to demonstrating:

- A knowledge of various theoretical approaches to ethics.
- An understanding of the critiques of traditional moral theory.
- An ability to write philosophical papers that engage in analysis, critical reflection, connection to experience, and argumentation.
- An ability to work collaboratively with others on a project that philosophically engages a contemporary ethical issue.

## Course Materials

- Immanuel Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals* (Hackett)
- John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Hackett)
- William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays* (Dover)
- Additional Readings will be made available on Canvas

## Assessment & Assignments

<b>Exam 1</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Exam 2</b>	<b>25%</b>
<b>Paper</b>	<b>30%</b>
<b>Attendance &amp; Participation</b>	<b>20%</b>

- A. Exams:** In Weeks 4 and 7, you will be given two exams that assess your comprehension of material covered in Units 1 and 2. These will be based **only** on the material covered in these units. They are **not comprehensive**. The exams will involve both short answer questions and longer essay questions.
- B. Paper:** As a final assignment, you will write one 4-5 page, double-spaced paper due Wednesday, December 6 at 5pm on Canvas. This will be a short argumentative paper that will be graded based on the quality of your writing, your demonstration of understanding, and the quality of your argument. I will post the prompt for this assignment one to two weeks before it is due. More details to follow.
- C. Attendance & Participation:** Attendance will be taken at the beginning of each class. Each student is allowed up to five absences in this course. After the fifth absence, your total grade will be lowered by 3 points for every class missed. Please come to class on time and prepared to discuss the material assigned. This requires that you do all of the reading **before arriving** to class and that you come with questions or comments based on the reading. Participation will be graded on our weekly class discussions and your weekly writing reflections. Every Thursday, class will take a discussion style format –it is important that you actively participate by asking question and respectfully engage in dialogue with your fellow classmates.

## Grading

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 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 complete lack of effort.

### **Student Expectations**

- 1.** Students are expected to **bring the assigned readings** to every class. I will sometimes ask you to read from the text or to discuss a portion of the text with your neighbors.
- 2.** If you have questions about the readings or our discussions, please feel free to raise them during class – this will spur further discussion and clarify difficulties that other students may also be facing.
- 3.** Be respectful – please refrain from sleeping, chatting, talking, and texting during class time. This behavior is disruptive for both me, and your fellow classmates, and will **not** be tolerated.
- 4.** Academic Dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) is strictly prohibited and may result in severe penalties. The instructor reserves the right to assign a grade of ‘F’ for the course to students who engage in any acts of academic dishonestly. Definitions, procedures, and penalties for such cases are spelled out on the UO website for academic dishonesty. See this guide if you are unsure about proper citation.  
<http://researchguides.uoregon.edu/citing-plagiarism>.
- 5.** Electronics – including laptops, tablets, e-readers, and cellular phones – should be put away in class unless needed for learning assistance.

### **Writing Assistance**

The University of Oregon has a Writing Lab available for students. They offer drop-in tutoring services on weekdays from 9am-4pm in 72 PLC. You can also make appointments. See <http://tlc.uoregon.edu/subjects/writing/>.

### **Accommodations**

Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346- 1155 or [uoaec@uoregon.edu](mailto:uoaec@uoregon.edu).

### **Discrimination and Sexual Harassment**

The UO is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of discrimination and sexual harassment, including sexual assault, domestic and dating violence and gender-based stalking. If you (or someone you know) has experienced or experiences gender-based violence (intimate partner violence, attempted or completed sexual assault, harassment, coercion, stalking, etc.), know that you are not alone. UO has staff members

trained to support survivors in navigating campus life, accessing health and counseling services, providing academic and housing accommodations, helping with legal protective orders, and more. Please be aware that all UO employees are required reporters. This means that if you tell me about a situation, I may have to report the information to my supervisor or the Office of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity. Although I have to report the situation, you will still have options about how your case will be handled, including whether or not you wish to pursue a formal complaint. Our goal is to make sure you are aware of the range of options available to you and have access to the resources you need. If you wish to speak to someone confidentially, you can call 541-346-SAFE, UO's 24-hour hotline, to be connected to a confidential counselor to discuss your options. You can also visit the SAFE website at [safe.uoregon.edu](http://safe.uoregon.edu).

**NOTE:** Syllabus & readings subject to change.

**Course Schedule:**

<b>Week 1</b> Monday	Intro to Course, Cornel West “What Philosophy Is” from <i>The Examined Life</i>
Tuesday	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> – Book 1 & Book 2 (3-31)
Wednesday	<i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> – Book 2 cont’d & Book 3 (31-59)
Thursday	Kant, <i>Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals</i> – Preface
Friday	<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i> – Ch.1
<b>Week 2</b> Monday	<i>Metaphysics of Morals</i> – Ch. 2
Tuesday	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> – Ch. 1
Wednesday	<i>Utilitarianism</i> – Ch. 2, 3
Thursday	<i>Utilitarianism</i> – Ch. 4
Friday	Nietzsche, <i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i> – Preface
<b>Week 3</b> Monday	<i>Genealogy of Morals</i> – Essay I
Tuesday	James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life” in <i>WTB</i>
Wednesday	James, “The Will to Believe” in <i>WTB</i>

Thursday	Gilligan, <i>In a Different Voice</i> – Letter to Readers, 1993 (ix-xvi) & Introduction (1-4)
Friday	<i>In a Different Voice</i> – Concepts of Self & Morality (64-85)
<b>Week 4</b> Monday	de Beauvoir, <i>Ethics of Ambiguity</i>
Tuesday	<i>Ethics of Ambiguity</i> cont'd
Wednesday	McBride, “Insurrectionist Ethics & Racism” and King Jr., “Letter from Birmingham Jail”
Thursday	Davis, <i>Women, Race, and Class</i> (Ch.2)
Friday	Baldwin, “Nothing Personal” & “The White Man’s Guilt”