

PHIL-010: Intro to Ethics

Georgetown University 2019

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Lecture: MW 9:30-10:45

Office Hours: MW 11:00-12:00 Instructor's Office New North Hall

1. Course Summary: What this course is about

In this issues course we will discuss the connection between social structure and morality at the level of individual action. We will engage with thinkers on this topic who span a variety of different geographic and historical contexts. Also notably, this course will feature a guided read of a full canonical text of ancient philosophy: Plato's *Republic*.

2. Course Requirements

Given the aims of the course, I have designed the requirements in such a way as to maximally encourage attendance, completing the course readings, and participating in discussion. Each of these components will be crucial to successful completion of the course. Final grades for the course will be determined by your quizzes, in-person participation, and two major essays. The breakdown looks like this:

Class Participation: 10%

Quizzes: 25%

Midterm Essay: 30%

Final Essay: 35%

2.1 Quizzes

There will be unannounced and frequent in-class quizzes, that could be given at the beginning of each lecture or section. These quizzes will ask basic comprehension questions about the readings and broad, recurrent themes in lecture. It will be difficult to do well on the quizzes without both of: a) consistently doing the readings and b) consistent, engaged attendance.

2.2 Class/Section Participation

10% of your grade for this course is determined on the basis of class participation: attending some combination of class, section, and office hours, and contributing to these spaces while you are there in ways that contribute to rather than detract from the experience of those you share the rooms with. Some students will feel more comfortable contributing thoughts or asking questions in one forum over another, which is fine. A passing grade for the course will simply require students to be active participants in some form or other. Active participation may involve asking question, weighing in with an interpretation of what some author is claiming, or sharing one's own point of view, insofar as it may helpfully inform the discussion at hand. It also involves being a thoughtful and engaged listener.

A good rule of thumb if you want a participation grade of a B or higher: Don't miss class, and don't disappear on me and your TAs: in-class contributions, participation in section, attendance at office hours, or (worst case scenario) emails explaining why you couldn't do any of the aforementioned are ways to check in.

2.3 Grading

Paper deadlines:

If you need an extension on any assignment, please ask *before* the due date. In general, I will be willing to give a 48-hour grace period (no questions asked). If you are still having trouble completing the assignment after that, you must set up an appointment to go over your ideas and set a schedule for finishing the paper. Unless an extension is granted in advance, assignments will be penalized 1/3 of a grade (A- to a B+, B+ to a B, etc.) for each day they are late.

Appealing a grade:

You can appeal any grade that you feel does not accurately represent the work you have done. All appeals for re-evaluation must be made in writing, no more than two weeks after your paper is returned, and no sooner than 48 hours after you receive your grade. Requests must provide a compelling argument for raising the grade, but an agreement to re-evaluate a paper is no guarantee of a better grade, and it can result in lower grades if there are more serious problems that were missed on the first reading.

The honor code:

The Georgetown University Honor pledge requires you to be honest in your academic endeavors and to hold yourself to the high ideals and rigorous standards of academic life. I expect you to be familiar with the letter and the spirit of this pledge; and, I will enforce the Honor Code by reporting any and all suspected cases of academic dishonesty.

2.4 Class Conduct

In this class I hope we can come to respect two things: the truth, and each other. There's a connection between these: we all know things, and so we all have things to learn from each other. But we can only acquire and build on each other's knowledge collaboratively – saying what we think others want to hear is not genuine contribution to discussion, and neither is the lack of *voiced* dissent equivalent to genuine consensus. Respect for each other, for knowledge, and for learning requires that we articulate our own views, opinions, misgivings, and questions with courage and respect, and that we act in ways that create and sustain the possibility for others to do the same.

The we will be discussing in this class may generate contentious claims, spirited discussions, vehement disagreements, and trenchant criticisms. This is at least part of what doing philosophy is all about – most importantly, it's part of what it is to live with other people as full people rather than as mere objects to predict and manage. I promise you all to do my best to raise philosophical issues and to start philosophical discussions in ways that are as sensitive as possible to the variety of viewpoints and opinions that we are sure to find among the members

of this class. My part, as instructor, is not the same as yours – but you all have a necessary part nevertheless and I ask you all to do yours as well.

3. Tentative Schedule

All readings will be made accessible from the course website. *Italics* indicates a book, meaning you will read excerpts from that book (unless otherwise noted), “Quotes” indicates an article, which you will read in its entirety unless otherwise noted.

- **Week 1 –**
1: No class

2: intro/syllabus day

- **Week 2**

1: Confucius – *The Analects*; Alexis McLeod, *Understanding Asian Philosophy*

2: Confucius – *The Analects*; Amy Olberding, “Etiquette: A Confucian Contribution to Moral Philosophy”

- **Week 3-8**

Plato – *The Republic* (entire text)

SPRING BREAK

- **Week 9-10 –**
Plato – Books VI-X of *The Republic* (finish)

MIDTERM ESSAY DUE: 11:59 PM Thursday, March 28th

- **Week 11 –**
1: Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (excerpts from)

2: Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (excerpts from)

- **Week 12 -**

1: Robert Nozick, *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

2: Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, *What is Property?*

- **Week 13 -**

1: Mary Midgley, “Trying Out One’s New Sword”

2: Serene Khader, *Decolonizing Universalism*

- **Week 14 -**

1: Combahee River Collective: “The Combahee River Collective Statement”

2: Sevinc Karaca, “Feminism in the Muslim World”

- **Week 15 -**

1: Kwame Nkrumah, “Neocolonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism”

2: Amilcar Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture” and “Message to the People of Portugal”

FINAL PAPER DUE, Date TBD

4. Resources

Accessibility and diversity:

One finds a great deal of diversity in teaching and learning styles in a modern university. These styles may not always mesh in ways that are conducive to the success and wellbeing of everyone in a course. But there are often ways of improving things. I am happy to discuss the structure of this course, and to work with the learning styles people have to the best of my abilities. So please feel free to talk to me in office hours. I sincerely think that every student is entitled to a meaningful and stimulating classroom experience! Disabled students and students on record with the university as requiring particular accommodations, please let me know that this is the case, in confidence, during the first few weeks of the semester—and please take advantage of services provided by the university. Finally, please let me know if you learn during the semester that something would make the classroom accessible.

Sexual misconduct:

As a faculty member and an educator, it is my responsibility to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. Georgetown University and its faculty are committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence and sexual assault. And university policy requires all faculty members to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University’s response to sexual misconduct. But Georgetown also has a number of fully confidential professional resources who can provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct. These resources include: [Jen Schweer](#) (202.687.0323) Associate Director of Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention; [Erica Shirley](#) (202.687.6985) Trauma Specialist (CAPS). More information about campus resources and reporting sexual misconduct can be found at <http://sexualassault.georgetown.edu>.