

PHIL 104: INTRODUCTION TO ETHICS SPRING 2017

Prof. Kisilevsky

TTh: 10:45-12:00; 12:15-1:30 PH 153

office hours: Tues, 3-4 PH 350G

email: Please email me through Blackboard

Course Overview:

Ethical reasoning proceeds by debate. It is not merely a matter of voicing an opinion or picking a “side” on an issue. It involves critically examining our most deeply held ideas and instincts in light of differing viewpoints and practices in order to forge subtle and detailed positions of our own. The best ethical reasoners engage with the broadest range of viewpoints, holding their ideas up for scrutiny from all perspectives, and responding to as many opposing voices as possible. In this course, we will be reading ethical writings whose contributions to philosophy is marked by their scope, depth, clarity and force of argumentation.

Your task as ethical reasoners is to contribute to this conversation. You will do this by learning to identify your interlocutors and situate their theses within a dialectic; motivating your theses to your interlocutors (and motivating their positions, in turn); providing arguments in support of your positions and identifying and assessing potential counter-evidence; and analyzing your arguments against those of your detractors so as to force clear, convincing, and precise positions of your own

In this class we will explore writings on key ethical questions, including cultural relativism, world poverty, euthanasia, abortion, moral luck, and war, and we will use these writings to illuminate theoretical and real-life difficulties. The writing workshops are designed to help you stage your writing assignments and develop well-informed views of your own. They will work in tandem with your other FYI courses to achieve coordinated writing goals, including thesis development, motive, essay structure, and research skills.

Evaluation:

1. Reading Questions: 15 x 1% each, for a total of 15%
2. Assignments: 3 x 25% for a total of 75%
3. Participation: 10%

Course Policies:

Submission of Work:

1. All submitted work is formal written scholarship. It must include your name and class number, and an appropriate title. Your work must be written in full, grammatically well-formed sentences, with correct spelling (including the correct spelling of authors’ names). Multiple pages must be stapled together. Footnotes or endnotes must be properly formatted, including full references and pinpoint citations.

2. All use of materials that do not come directly from your head needs to be properly cited. Failure to fully cite all material used constitutes an academic offence and will be treated as such. For more information about citation formats, consult the Queens College Writing Center, or the Purdue Online Writing Lab (available online). For information about what constitutes an academic offence, see the College Bulletin.
3. The only excuses for a late assignment are illness or emergency. You must provide official documentation for this (a doctor's note or a letter from the registrar) specifying that you could not fulfill your work requirements on the dates that they were due. You do not need to include your reasons for lateness; you are entitled to your privacy on this. Late assignments submitted without official documentation will be docked 2% per day, including weekends.
4. **Reading Questions:** The reading questions are questions requiring brief answers (1-5 sentences) designed to guide you through the course readings. There is one due every class, and you are responsible for 15 of them. Materials submitted for the writing workshops count toward your reading questions. Aside from the writing workshops, answers to reading questions are due at the *beginning* of class. (Writing workshop materials can be submitted after class, once we have completed the workshop.) I will not accept late submissions.
5. **In-class participation:** As philosophy proceeds by debate, there will be a large emphasis on discussion in this class. You will be graded on your level of participation. Grades will be awarded for *meaningful participation* in class discussions. This includes thoughtful input on the matter at hand, thoughtful responses to comments by your peers (why you agree, disagree, don't like, etc. their suggestions), *any* question about the content of the readings, and so on. Lack of familiarity with the assigned readings, not paying attention to your classmates' comments, asking me to repeat the question, prolonged absences from the class, and so on will all result in *loss* of participation marks. *Checking your phone or other devices in class will result in loss of participation grades.* If there is an emergency requiring you to keep your phone on, please notify me at the beginning of class.
6. You are expected to come to class prepared and participate in class discussions. I will often call names off the roster.

Classroom and Online Environment:

Electronic Devices: There are *no laptops, tablets, phones* or other devices allowed in class. If you have reading or writing disability and need to take notes on a laptop, please contact Disability Services to arrange for special accommodation. If you are expecting an important phone call during class time, please let me know ahead of time and I will accommodate you. Otherwise, please make sure your cell phones are turned off during class time.

Reading Materials: Please make sure to always bring hard copies of the reading materials to class. We refer to them frequently during class discussion, and you will

often be called on to read from them. Failure to have your reading material on you will result in loss of participation grades.

There is a lot of discussion of controversial issues in this class. The classroom is like any other professional environment. You should always maintain a professional attitude towards others. This includes

1. Paying attention when other people are talking. I will often call on you to respond to one another.
2. Not interrupting other people when they are speaking.
3. Treating your fellow students with respect even when you disagree.

Failure to adhere to these requirements will negatively affect your participation grade.

Resources:

The readings will all be available online, through Blackboard. If you would like a printout, you can buy a bound copy at Queens Copy, 6501 Kissena Blvd. The class website is run through Blackboard. It is essential that you are able to log on to Blackboard and can access the class online.

Communication:

I frequently post announcements or important course material on Blackboard. I also send emails to the class or to individual students through Blackboard. It is also the most effective way to get in touch with me; emailing me through Blackboard guarantees that your email gets to me and does not end up in my spam folder. It is crucial that the email address you have registered on Blackboard is functioning, and that you check it regularly. It is the only way I have of communicating with you directly.

Schedule of Classes:

1. Introduction
2. Plato, Apology
3. Plato, Apology, cont'd
4. Regan, How Not to Answer Moral Questions
5. Rachels, The Challenge of Cultural Relativism
6. Rachels, The Challenge of Cultural Relativism
7. Plato, The Euthyphro
8. Singer, Famine, Affluence and Morality
9. Singer, Famine, Affluence and Morality, cont'd
10. Singer, Famine, Affluence and Morality, cont'd
11. Thomson, A Defense of Abortion
12. Thomson, A Defense of Abortion, cont'd
13. Nagel, Moral Luck (on website)
14. Nagel, Moral Luck (cont'd)
15. Mill, Utilitarianism
16. Mill, Utilitarianism, cont'd

17. Kant, The Categorical Imperative
18. Kant, The Categorical Imperative, cont'd
19. Nagel, War and Massacre
20. Nagel, War and Massacre cont'd
21. Nagel, War and Massacre, cont'd
22. Ethics of Immigration: Joseph Carens, The Case for Open Borders
23. Ethics of Immigration, cont'd
24. Ethics of voting: TBA
25. Ethics of Race and Urbanization: Shelby, The Dark Ghetto
26. Ethics of Race and Urbanization, cont'd
27. Ethics of Race and Urbanization, cont'd
28. Wrap-up