

## **PHIL 1003: Introduction to Ethics**

Fall 2019

Class: MWF 12:20pm-1:15pm, McMicken Hall 205

Instructor: Andrew Evans ([evans3ah@mail.uc.edu](mailto:evans3ah@mail.uc.edu))

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:15pm-2:15 pm, McMicken Hall 257

### **Required Book:**

Russ Shafer-Landau *The Fundamentals of Ethics: Fourth Edition*

### **Course Description:**

What is ethics? What does it mean for an action to be right or wrong? What are the major theories in ethics? These are the central questions of this course. We will delve into the main ethical theories within the field called “normative ethics” in addition to discussing what ethics is in the first place—which is a central question in a field called “metaethics.”

### **Learning Goals:**

When you finish the semester, you should be able to...

- Give a brief and accurate description of all the theories we discussed in normative ethics and metaethics.
- Summarize a philosopher’s argument, accurately, clearly, and succinctly.
- Argue for your own philosophical claim, supporting your argument with *reasons*.
- Discuss how the theories we discuss in class relate to your own life.

### **Grade Scale:**

A 463-500	B 413-432	C 363-382	D 313-332
A- 448-462	B- 398-412	C- 348-362	D- 298-312
B+ 433-447	C+ 383-397	D+ 333-347	F 0-297

### **Point Distribution:**

Assignment 1	50 points
Assignment 2	70 points
Assignment 3	70 points
Assignment 4	70 points
In-class activities	Eleven activities worth 10 points each
Midterm exam	70 points
Final exam	70 points

Total	500 points
-------	------------

**Late Assignment and Missing Class Policy:**

Late assignments can be turned in up to one week after the due date and will be penalized 20%. After one week, late assignments will not be accepted. If you have an emergency of some kind (for example a health crisis) or some extenuating circumstance that prevents you from turning your work in on time, then please discuss this with me and we will come to a solution. If you miss class on a day in which we do an in-class activity, you cannot make-up the points you missed (again if there is an emergency or some other issue, exceptions are possible). Also, if you miss class on the day of an exam you cannot make up the exam (again, exceptions can be made if there was some sort of emergency or some other extenuating circumstance).

**Assignments:**

There will be four written assignments for the class. More information will be available when they are assigned, but you should expect that they will involve describing a theory or a philosopher's view, arguing for your own view on a philosophical topic, and/or describing how a theory relates to your own life.

**In-Class Activities:**

Every Friday that we have class, we will do an in-class activity. What we do will vary from week to week. Many times, this in-class activity will be a group activity that you will turn in with your group.

**Exams:**

There will be two in-class, written exams; a midterm and a final. The final will not be cumulative. I will regularly post study questions to aide in your studying for the exams.

**Academic Misconduct:**

Do not plagiarize or cheat in any way. Follow the university's policies on academic misconduct, which are linked below. If I discover that you have broken the university's policies on academic misconduct, I am required to report it. Punishments range from failing the assignment to expulsion from the university.

[Academic Misconduct](#)

**Inclusion:**

It is my goal to make this classroom a safe space for people of all ages, races, national origins, ancestries, political affiliations, disability statuses, medical conditions, gender identities, gender expressions, sexes, sexual orientations, marital statuses, veteran statuses, and other forms of difference. No discrimination will be tolerated. On the first day I will ask you to fill out a notecard with the name you would like me to call you and any other information you would like me to know

about you (for example your pronouns). Please let me know (via email, in person, or on the notecard) if there are any other inclusion-related considerations that I should be aware of.

### **Accessibility Resources:**

Regarding accessibility, I will do everything I can to ensure that accommodations will be made when needed.

The University of Cincinnati is committed to providing all students with equal access to learning opportunities. Accessibility Resources (formerly Disability Services) is the official campus office that works to arrange for reasonable accommodations for students with an identified physical, psychological or cognitive disability (learning, ADD/ADHD, psychological, visual, hearing, physical, cognitive, medical condition, etc.) Students are encouraged to contact Accessibility Resources to arrange for a confidential meeting to discuss services and accommodations. Contact should be initiated as soon as possible to allow adequate time for accommodations to be arranged.

Here are some helpful links:

[Accessibility Network](#)

[Accessibility Resources](#)

### **Other Helpful Resources:**

[Academic Excellence and Support Services](#)

[Academic Writing Center](#)

[Counseling and Psychological Services](#)

[University Health Services](#)

[Title IX website](#)

[Women Helping Women](#)

[LGBTQ Center](#)

[UC Public Safety](#)

### **Materials:**

Because you will have to do some writing in class, you will need to bring some paper and something to write with each class. You should also bring the textbook to class.

### **Technology:**

You will need access to the internet for this class because I will make some readings available online and some assignments will be turned in online. If you have trouble getting connected to the internet, please let me know. As far as using devices in class goes, please follow these rules:

1. Do not text or talk on the phone in class, if you need to use your phone, leave the room.
2. You can use a laptop/tablet to take notes, but do not use it for non-class related things (e.g. Instagram). Using a laptop to shop online during class is disrespectful and distracting to your fellow students. Don't be that person.
3. Whenever we form a circle to have a discussion, everyone will need to put away their laptops and tablets.

4. Be respectful with your use of technology. You can use technology, and for some people it is very helpful. But just be cognizant of those around you and remember that you are coming to class to learn some material and engage in philosophical conversation.

### **Communication:**

The best way to communicate with me is email. My email address is: [evans3ah@mail.uc.edu](mailto:evans3ah@mail.uc.edu). I am usually able to respond to an email within 48 hours. Please feel free to email me with any questions or concerns you have. I may suggest we meet during my office hours if I think that would be an easier way to address your question or concern. I am also available to meet outside of my office hours. If you email me, we can arrange an appointment.

### **Classroom Community:**

In this class we will be talking about some sensitive topics that will likely lead to some disagreement in opinions. I ask that everyone treat each other respect and sensitivity. If a particular topic is especially controversial or potential triggering, I will do my best to warn you. At the beginning of the semester we will complete a classroom community document together in which we will agree on what we expect from each other and what others can expect from us. If at any point you feel as though the classroom environment is problematic in any way, please contact me.

### **Schedule:**

Note: When I say “FOE” below I mean the book *The Fundamentals of Ethics*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Required Reading</u>
<u>Mon Aug 26</u>	<u>Read the syllabus</u> <u>FOE Introduction</u>
<u>Wed Aug 28</u>	<u>FOE Chapter 5 Morality and Religion</u>
<u>Fri Aug 30</u>	<u>In-class activity</u> <u>No assigned reading</u>
<u>Mon Sept 2</u>	<u>No class—Labor Day</u>
<u>Wed Sept 4</u>	<u>Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i></u>
<u>Fri Sept 6</u>	<u>In-class activity</u> <u>No assigned reading</u>
<u>Mon Sept 9</u>	<u>FOE Chapter 6 Natural Law</u> <u>St. Thomas Aquinas “Treatise on Law”</u>
<u>Wed Sept 11</u>	<u>No assigned reading</u>
<u>Fri Sept 13</u>	<u>No class—Andrew is out of town</u> <u>Assignment 1 due on Sunday Sept 15!</u>
<u>Mon Sept 16</u>	<u>FOE Chapter 8 Ethical Egoism</u>
<u>Wed Sept 18</u>	<u>Plato “Ring of Gyges” from <i>Republic</i></u>
<u>Fri Sept 20</u>	<u>In-class activity</u> <u>No assigned reading</u>
<u>Mon Sept 23</u>	<u>FOE Chapter 9 Consequentialism: Its Nature</u>
<u>Wed Sept 25</u>	<u>Bentham “The Principle of Utility”</u>
<u>Fri Sept 27</u>	<u>In-class activity</u> <u>No assigned reading</u>

<u>Mon Sept 30</u>	<u>FOE Chapter 10 Consequentialism: Its Difficulties</u>
<u>Wed Oct 2</u>	<u>Darwall “Utilitarianism: Act or Rule?”</u>
<u>Fri Oct 4</u>	<u>In-class activity</u> <u>No assigned reading</u> <u>Assignment 2 due!</u>
<u>Mon Oct 7</u>	<u>FOE Chapter 11 The Kantian Perspective: Fairness and Justice</u>
<u>Wed Oct 9</u>	<u>Kant “The Moral Law and the Autonomy of the Will”</u>
<u>Friday Oct 11</u>	<u>No class—Reading Day</u>
<u>Mon Oct 14</u>	<u>FOE Chapter 12 The Kantian Perspective: Autonomy and Respect</u>
<u>Wed Oct 16</u>	<u>O’Neil “Kant on Treating People as Ends in Themselves”</u>
<u>Fri Oct 18</u>	<u>Midterm Exam</u>
<u>Mon Oct 21</u>	<u>FOE Chapter 13 Social Contract Theory</u>
<u>Wed Oct 23</u>	<u>Hobbes “The State of Nature and the Laws of Nature”</u>
<u>Fri Oct 25</u>	<u>In-class activity</u> <u>No assigned reading</u>
<u>Mon Oct 28</u>	<u>FOE Chapter 17 Virtue Ethics</u>
<u>Wed Oct 30</u>	<u>Aristotle “Virtue and Character”</u>
<u>Fri Nov 1</u>	<u>In-class activity</u> <u>No assigned reading</u>
<u>Mon Nov 4</u>	<u>Hursthouse “Normative Virtue Ethics”</u>
<u>Wed Nov 6</u>	<u>FOE Chapter 18 Feminist Ethics</u>
<u>Fri Nov 8</u>	<u>In-class activity</u> <u>No assigned reading</u>
<u>Mon Nov 11</u>	<u>Assignment 3 due!</u> <u>No class—Veterans Day</u>
<u>Wed Nov 13</u>	<u>Gilligan “Moral Orientation and Moral Development”</u>
<u>Fri Nov 15</u>	<u>In-class activity</u> <u>No assigned reading</u>
<u>Mon Nov 18</u>	<u>Noddings “The Ethics of Caring” and Card “Caring and Evil”</u>
<u>Wed Nov 20</u>	<u>FOE Chapter 19 Ethical Relativism</u>
<u>Fri Nov 22</u>	<u>In-class activity</u> <u>No assigned reading</u>
<u>Mon Nov 25</u>	<u>Benedict “A Defense of Ethical Relativism” and FOE Chapter 20 Moral Nihilism</u>
<u>Wed Nov 27</u>	<u>No class</u>
<u>Fri Nov 29</u>	<u>No class—Thanksgiving Break</u>
<u>Mon Dec 2</u>	<u>Assignment 4 due!</u> <u>FOE Chapter 21 Arguments Against Moral Objectivity</u>
<u>Wed Dec 4</u>	<u>Enoch “Why I am an Objectivist about Ethics (And Why You Are, Too)”</u>
<u>Fri Dec 6</u>	<u>In-class activity</u> <u>No assigned reading</u> <u>Optional Revision Due!</u>
<u>During Exam Week</u>	<u>Final Exam</u>

## Sample Assignment

### Introduction to Ethics

### Writing Assignments

#### Writing Assignment 1

In this first assignment, I want you to practice getting clear on what philosophers are saying. You should not give your own views on the matter, just explain the theories that I ask you to.

In the *Euthyphro*, Socrates questions Euthyphro about the nature of piety. Euthyphro offers up several possible definitions of piety, and Socrates rejects them all. Euthyphro's third definition of piety is "piety is what all gods love" which leads to the question "Do the gods love actions because they are pious, or are actions pious because the gods love them?". **Explain** Euthyphro's answer to this question. **Also explain** Socrates' objection to the third definition of piety, in light of Euthyphro's answer to the question (this can be found on pages 11-14 of the *Euthyphro* dialogue and it is also discussed in Chapter 5 of the *Fundamentals of Ethics* book).

In the *Fundamentals of Ethics* book Shafer-Landau explains how the above question—"Do the gods love actions because they are pious, or are actions pious because the gods love them?"—is related to Divine Command Theory. **Explain** what Divine Command Theory is. **And then explain** how the question above relates to Divine Command Theory (this is discussed in Chapter 5 of the *Fundamentals of Ethics* book). **Why does Shafer-Landau think that Divine Command Theory fails?**

This writing assignment should be **2-4 double spaced pages**. When you are talking about a particular part of the *Euthyphro* or the *Fundamentals of Ethics* book, or if you are quoting the work directly, **put the author and page number at the end of the sentence**. For example: (Plato, 12) or (Shafer-Landau, 67). You should not rely on long quotations from the works, instead it is better to put things in your own words. You do not need to include a bibliography. You will turn the assignment in on Blackboard under "Course Documents". The assignment is due on **Sunday Sept 15 at 11:59pm**. If the assignment is late it will be docked 20%. After the assignment is one week late, it will not be accepted (unless there is some sort of extenuating circumstance, but this is up to my judgment). I will provide feedback on how you did in order to aide you in the next assignment. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

#### Rubric

**45-50 points paper-** The paper accurately explains the relevant parts of the *Euthyphro*, explains Divine Command Theory, explains how the question above relates to Divine Command Theory, and explains why Shafer-Landau thinks that Divine Command Theory fails. It contains very few inaccuracies. The paper is between 2-4 double spaced pages and is written clearly and concisely. The reading is cited properly.

**40-44 points paper-** This paper has many of the features described in the description of the 45-50 paper but is missing a few. There are a few inaccuracies in the paper. Overall though, it is still a clear and concise paper.

**35-39 points paper-** The paper is missing several features described in the description of the 45-50 points paper. It has several important inaccuracies. This paper is likely not very clear or concise.

**0-34 points paper-** This paper has very little to do with the prompt. It is not clear or concise. It is likely much too short or much too long.

## Writing Assignment 2

In Chapter 8 of the *Fundamentals of Ethics* book, Shafer-Landau discusses ethical egoism. For this assignment, the goal will be for you to explain ethical egoism, how it differs from psychological egoism, explain an argument against ethical egoism, and then give you own view. In order to do this, you should:

1. Begin by defining ethical egoism. Also, define psychological egoism and how it differs from ethical egoism.
2. Explain the argument against ethical egoism that Shafer-Landau gives on page 108, which he calls the “argument from paradigm cases”. You will need to do more than just quote his argument or even put it in your own words. I want you to make it clear that you understand the argument and why it is an argument against ethical egoism.
3. Do you think that the argument against ethical egoism (the “argument from paradigm cases” on page 108 of the book) succeeds or fails? Why? In order to answer this question, you will need to first state whether you agree or disagree with the argument. If you agree, you need to give *reasons why* you agree. If you disagree, you need to give *reasons why* you disagree. You cannot just restate what Shafer-Landau has to say about the argument—I am looking for you to give your *own argument* about why the “argument from paradigm cases” succeeds or fails. Remember, giving an argument is different from giving a series of opinions. The goal of an argument is to try to convince your reader that you are right.

This writing assignment should be **3-5 double spaced pages**. When you are talking about a particular part of the *Fundamentals of Ethics* book, or if you are quoting the work directly, **put the author and page number at the end of the sentence**. You should not rely on long quotations from the book, instead it is better to put things in your own words. You do not need to include a bibliography. You will turn the assignment in on Blackboard under “Course Documents”. The assignment is due on **Friday Oct 4 at 11:59pm**. If the assignment is late it will be docked 20%. After the assignment is one week late, it will not be accepted (unless there is some sort of extenuating circumstance, but this is up to my judgment). I will provide feedback on how you did in order to aide you in the next assignment. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

## Rubric

**63-70 points paper-** The paper accurately explains the ethical egoism, psychological egoism, how the two differ, and the “argument from paradigm cases”. It contains very few inaccuracies. The paper also gives an *argument* with *plausible reasons* about whether the “argument from paradigm cases” succeeds or fails that goes beyond what Shafer-Landau says. The paper is between 3-5 double spaced pages and is written clearly and concisely. The reading is cited properly.

**56-62 points paper-** This paper has many of the features described in the description of the 63-70 points paper but is missing a few. There are a few inaccuracies in the paper. There are likely some minor issues with the argument that is presented. Overall though, it is still a clear and concise paper.

**49-55 points paper-** The paper is missing several features described in the description of the 63-70 points paper. It has several important inaccuracies. The argument presented in the paper likely does not work. This paper is likely not very clear or concise.

**0-48 points paper-** This paper has very little to do with the prompt. It may or may not even contain an explanation or argument. It is not clear or concise. It is likely much too short or much too long.

### Writing Assignment 3

In this paper you will explain two ethical theories (social contract theory and virtue ethics). You will then decide which you think is a better ethical theory. Then, you will write an argument defending that position using two reasons. Last, you will come up with an objection from the other side.

1. Begin by **explaining what social contract theory is** in a few sentences. A good way to phrase this is: “According to social contract theory, an action is ethical if...” Then, you have to explain what that means in detail.
2. Then **explain what virtue ethics is** in a few sentences. A good way to phrase this is: “According to virtue ethics, an action is ethical if...” Then, you have to explain what that means in detail.
3. Then tell the reader **which ethical theory you think is better**. After making clear which you think is better give **two reasons** that support your position. These reasons need to be explained in detail. It is not enough to just state them in two sentences. The goal is to convince the reader that one ethical theory is better than the other. So, you also have to make sure that you are using **strong reasons**. If your reasons are open to easy objections, then they are not strong reasons.
4. Then come up with **one objection** that someone who supports the **other ethical theory** might say against your position. This objection should respond directly to at least one, if not both, of the reasons that you gave in support of your position. Make sure to explain the objection in detail. Also, make sure it is a strong objection. If the objection is obviously wrong, it is not a strong objection.

This writing assignment should be **3-5 double spaced pages**. **When you are talking about ideas from the readings, or if you are quoting the readings directly, put the author and page number at the end of the sentence in parentheses.** You should not rely on long quotations from the readings, instead it is better to put things in your own words. You do not need to include a bibliography. You will turn the assignment in on Blackboard under “Course Documents”. The assignment is due on **Monday Nov 11 at 11:59pm**. If the assignment is late it will be docked 20%. After the assignment is one week late, it will not be accepted (unless there is some sort of extenuating circumstance, but this is up to my judgment). I will provide feedback on how you did in order to aide you in the next assignment. If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

Rubric



**63-70 points paper-** The paper accurately explains social contract theory and virtue ethics. It also gives two strong reasons as to why one is better than the other. It also has one strong objection from the other side. There are very few inaccuracies in this paper. The paper is between 3-5 double spaced pages and is written clearly and concisely. The reading is cited properly.

**56-62 points paper-** This paper has many of the features described in the description of the 63-70 points paper but is missing a few. There are a few inaccuracies in the paper. There are likely some minor issues with the argument or objection. Overall though, it is still a clear and concise paper.

**49-55 points paper-** The paper is missing several features described in the description of the 63-70 points paper. It has several important inaccuracies. The argument presented in the paper likely does not work and the objection is probably not strong. This paper is likely not very clear or concise.

**0-48 points paper-** This paper has very little to do with the prompt. It may or may not even contain an explanation, argument, or objection. It is not clear or concise. It is likely much too short or much too long.

#### Writing Assignment 4

In “Moral Orientation and Moral Development” Carol Gilligan says that we can approach moral situations from two different perspectives: the “justice perspective” and the “care perspective”.

1. First, **explain the justice perspective and the care perspective.** Here you should be referencing Gilligan’s paper. You can also use the *Fundamentals of Ethics* book if you think that will be useful. It is important to make sure you fully explain both perspectives and show how they are different. It may be helpful to give an example of looking at a situation from the justice perspective and from the care perspective. Whether you are quoting from the reading directly or paraphrasing, it is important that you **cite the reading** by including the author’s last name and the page number from where you are referencing. But you should not rely on many quotations, it is better to paraphrase instead to demonstrate you understand the reading.

Next, consider this **scenario**:

*Imagine you are assigned a group project for a class. You are in a group with two other students, both of which are doing badly in the class. You, on the other hand, are doing well in the class. You agree to meet with the two students tonight to do the project, which is due tomorrow. They tell you they are relying on you to help them get a good grade in the class, and you agree to help. Then, you get a phone call from your mother that your little brother is sick, and your mother needs you to come home to watch him so that she can go to work tonight. You have a choice to make: you can tell your mother you have to meet with your group and so cannot watch your brother, or you can tell your group mates that you have to watch your brother so you cannot meet with the group.*

2. Next, answer these questions: **What would someone taking the justice perspective advise you to do in this scenario? Why? What would someone taking the care perspective advise you to do in this scenario? Why?** When you answer these questions, you need to make sure you answer the “Why?” part. You need to give **plausible reasons** why **someone from that perspective**

would advise you that way. So, you need to cite features of the perspective that would point towards a particular course of action.

3. Last, answer this question: **What would you do in this scenario?** Then, **defend your actions with plausible reasons.** So, you need to try to convince the reader that whatever you are choosing to do is the right thing to do. In order to do this, you need to give plausible reasons why someone should take that course of action. You do not need to reference either the care or the justice perspective. But you can if you think it would be helpful for defending your actions. What is important though is that you defend your actions with plausible reasons.

This writing assignment should be **3-5 double spaced pages.** When you are talking about ideas from the readings, or if you are quoting the readings directly, put the author and page number at the end of the sentence in parentheses. You should not rely on long quotations from the readings, instead it is better to put things in your own words. You do not need to include a bibliography. You will turn the assignment in on Blackboard under "Course Documents". The assignment is due on **Monday Dec 2 at 11:59pm.** If the assignment is late it will be docked 20%. After the assignment is one week late, it will not be accepted (unless there is some sort of extenuating circumstance, but this is up to my judgment). If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know.

### Rubric

**63-70 points paper-** The paper accurately explains the justice perspective, the care perspective, and how both would respond to the scenario. You also defend a position as to what you would do in the scenario with plausible reasons. There are very few inaccuracies in this paper. The paper is between 3-5 double spaced pages and is written clearly and concisely. The reading is cited properly.

**56-62 points paper-** This paper has many of the features described in the description of the 63-70 points paper but is missing a few. There are a few inaccuracies in the paper. There are likely some minor issues with your explanations or the defense of your position. Overall though, it is still a clear and concise paper.

**49-55 points paper-** The paper is missing several features described in the description of the 63-70 points paper. It has several important inaccuracies. There likely are serious problems with the explanations and/or the defense of your position. This paper is likely not very clear or concise.

**0-48 points paper-** This paper has very little to do with the prompt. It may or may not even contain any explanations or a defense of your position. It is not clear or concise. It is likely much too short or much too long.