

PHI 3650 # 20395: Moral Philosophy

Professor: Arina Pismenny

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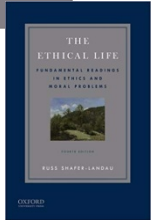
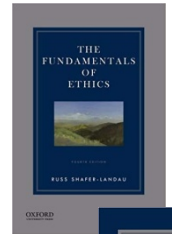
MWF 3-3:50

LEI 0142

Required Texts:

1. Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Ethical Life: Fundamental Readings in Ethics and Contemporary Moral Problems* (2017), 4th Edition, Oxford University Press, ISBN: 9780190631314 [EL]

2. Russ Shafer-Landau, *The Fundamentals of Ethics* (2017), 4th edition, Oxford University Press, ISBN: 9780190631390 [FE]



Additional reading materials are posted on Canvas. It is your responsibility to download them and read them. The readings posted on Canvas are designated by [CN] on the syllabus.

I. COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

Course Description:

This course provides an introduction to problems of moral philosophy, or ethics. We will be asking the following questions: 1. Where does morality come from? 2. What do we do when we make a moral judgment? 3. What should morality be like? 4. What does morality do for us? 5. Why should we be moral? In attempting to answer these questions, we will examine and scrutinize various views, theories, and arguments. For instance, we will look at the popular view of Cultural Relativism (“What’s right is whatever my culture says is right”), examine the role of religion in morality (e.g., “What’s right is just what God says is right”), and, most importantly, attempt to understand the role of reason in morality with views like Social Contract Theory, Kantian Ethics, and Utilitarianism. We will work with historical as well as contemporary texts and look at the ways in which they attempt to provide systematic procedures for answering questions about right and wrong. In addition, we will discuss a variety of specific moral issues such as assisted suicide, racial biases, and drug policies and drug addiction among others. Our discussion will also draw on empirical data pertaining to these issues. Throughout the course we will seek not so much to form judgments about specific moral issues—most of us do that on our own anyway, though with varying degrees of certitude—but to improve our thinking about the considerations that may count as reasons for and against the moral judgments we are tempted to make.

General education objectives and learning outcomes

This course is a Humanities (H) subject area course in the UF General Education Program. Humanities courses provide instruction in the history, key themes, principles, terminology, and theory or methodologies used within a humanities discipline or the humanities in general. Students will learn to identify and to analyze the key elements, biases and influences that shape thought. These courses emphasize clear and effective analysis and approach issues and problems from multiple perspectives. A minimum grade of C is required for general education credit.

PHI 3650 accomplishes these goals by familiarizing students with some key philosophical topics and arguments concerning knowledge, personal identity, and the nature of ethical truths as well as others. Students will become adept at thinking critically, analyzing arguments, and writing clearly and persuasively.

The General Education Student Learning Outcomes (SLO's) divide into three areas: CONTENT – students demonstrate competence in the terminology, concepts, theories and methodologies used within the discipline; COMMUNICATION – students communicate knowledge, ideas and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms appropriate to the discipline; and CRITICAL THINKING – students analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline-specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

Students will satisfy the CONTENT SLO by demonstrating a mastery of some key philosophical concepts as well as central arguments in the discipline. The COMMUNICATION SLO will be achieved by two Short Writing Assignments (500-750 words each), one Argumentative Essay (1500-2000 words each), and regular participation in class. Students will be required to explain and evaluate various philosophical views. Students will also demonstrate achievement of the CRITICAL THINKING SLO through the Short Writing Assignments and Argumentative Essay, which will be on assigned topics designed to test students' critical thinking abilities. Writing assignments and papers will be graded on the bases of a student's comprehension of the relevant issues, development and cogent defense of her or his position, clarity of expression, and mechanics.

In short, at the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Explain some traditional philosophical positions as well as common objections to these.
- Analyze, evaluate, construct, and present persuasive and cogent arguments for particular philosophical positions
- Think critically about difficult and complex topics

Teaching Philosophy:

My goal is not to convince you that any of the authors in our text have all the answers. It is to help you understand their thoughts so that critical reflection on those thoughts can play a meaningful role in forming your own.

II. DOING YOUR PART

It's your decision whether or not to remain in this course. If you decide to stay, think of your decision as a commitment to participate actively in your own learning, take responsibility for your education, and be an active learner in this course. Philosophy requires a lot of reading, and it is very difficult reading. You will need to devote a significant amount of time to it. You will need to carefully follow the schedule at the end of the syllabus, regularly participate in class discussions, and seriously prepare for the assignments.

III. HOW YOU AND I WILL MEASURE YOUR PROGRESS

Measuring your progress in points will make it easy for you to determine your own grade and progress at any time. The total possible number of points for the course is 100. Final letter grades will be assigned on the standard point/percentage scale:

A: 93.0-100; A-: 90.0-92.9; B+: 87.1-89.9; B: 83.0-87.0; B-: 80.0-82.9; C+: 77.1-79.9; C: 73.0-77.0; C-: 70.0-72.9; D+: 67.1-69.9; D: 63.0-67.0; D-: 60-62.9; E: 0.0-59.9.

What do grades mean at UF?

A is for excellent work.

B is for very good work.

C is for adequate or average work.

D is for below average, inadequate work.

E is for unacceptable work, i.e., work that is not at the college level.

Components of Course Grade

Reflection journal: 5%

Team debate: 25%

Short summaries (2): 30% (15% each)

Final paper: 30%

Attendance: 5%

Participation: 5%

Total: 100%

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Homework: You have homework due every week. It consists of reading the assigned materials and answering study questions.

In-class reflections journal: You should always take notes in class. I will be asking you to spend 5 minutes or so in class to write on a specific question. Then I will ask you to read what you wrote aloud to the class. Your reading your reflections will contribute to the class discussion. You will also need to upload your in-class reflections into the journal entry on Canvas by Fridays. You may do so by typing up your response and uploading it in .doc, .docx, or a .pdf format. You may also take a picture of your hand-written reflection journal response, and upload the picture of your work on Canvas. You will receive 5 points for the journal if it is neatly kept at the end of semester. You should keep track of the dates on which you've written your reflections, and the question you were attempting to answer. This exercise will also help you track your thoughts throughout the semester. It will be fun to track your progress throughout the semester. If you were absent on the day we had the in-class reflection journal exercise, you do not need to do it. You are excused.

Team debates: We will hold three in-class debates following the format of the Ethics Bowl. The class will be divided into six teams, with five to six people per team. Each team should prepare its positions on two moral issues assigned to them, come up with arguments to defend the position, anticipate potential objections they might face, and rebut the objections presented by the other team. Team members will receive one grade, and, for this reason, are encouraged to work as a *team*. To ensure that everyone is doing their fair share of work, each group member will e-mail me their peer review reports, grading everyone's performance in the group, including one's own. Team debates are worth 25% of the final grade.

Short summaries: Each student will write two short summaries (500-750 words) on specific texts covered in class. Each student will be randomly assigned two particular texts to summarize. The summary should identify the main idea(s) expressed in the text, the arguments and examples the author offers to support it. The summary should demonstrate the mastery of a given philosophical text. They are worth 15% each.

Final paper: The final paper should be between 1500 and 2000 words on any topic we have covered in class. In it, you will need to take a stand on a philosophical issue and defend your point of view with evidence and arguments. You will need to demonstrate the knowledge you have acquired in the course. The final paper is worth 30% of the final grade.

***Late Work** will not be accepted. There will be no make-ups for missed assignments. This policy may be overridden only by extenuating cases. In order to makeup an assignment, the following conditions must be met: (i) the instructor must be notified well in advance, (ii) the student must have a formal written excuse, and (iii) the missed assignment must be made-up within one calendar week.

Attendance: Your presence in class is absolutely necessary to ensure the fullest realization of our learning objectives. More than **four** absences, for any reason, create an academic problem, which may result in you being dropped from the course. Once you have passed the allowed number of absences, 1% will be taken off from your attendance points for each additional absence. Attendance is worthy 5% of your final grade.

Please be aware that people who are sleeping in class will be marked absent because it is not enough to be physically present in class. You also have to be conscious.

If you need to leave early, please consult me before class.

Latenesses will also affect your attendance record. Two latenesses will count as one absence. If you do arrive late, make sure to notify me at the end of the class that you were here. Otherwise, once marked absent, the attendance record will not be changed.

Note taking: [Research shows that note taking significantly improves students' ability to remember and understand the material they have learned](https://tinyurl.com/h98vbgr)

< <https://tinyurl.com/h98vbgr> >. When taking notes, you should write down ideas. You should **not** be copying the text of the slides, as the slides are available on Canvas, and you are wasting time re-writing them. Instead, you should be summarizing the material in your own sentences. This is a very good way to learn.

Hand-written notes are superior to typed-up notes because writing notes by hand engages your mind to a much greater extent than typing does. For this reason, I recommend to all of you to write your notes by hand.

Electronic devices class policy: Cell phone and smart watch use during class is not allowed for any reason. Please be sure that they are turned off. If you use your cell phone in class, you will be asked to leave, and attendance points will be subtracted.

You may use a laptop or tablet for note-taking *only*.

If you wish to record a lecture, be sure to obtain permission from me first.

Participation: Participation means contributing to the class discussions by asking questions, making comments, and answering questions. This will enable me to learn your names. Your class participation will be tracked by me and Nicole. Participation is worth 5% of your final grade.

Course Evaluations: Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via **GatorEvals**. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluer.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>. In evaluating this course, you should refer to the **Learning Objectives** on the syllabus (pp. 1-2).

Cheating and Plagiarism policy: If you are cheating on an assignment, you will receive an F on that assignment (no retakes). If you plagiarize an essay, full penalties of the university will be strictly enforced.

Here is **University of Florida's Policy on Academic Honesty**

https://flexible.dce.ufl.edu/media/flexibleuceufl.edu/documents/uf_policy_student_conduct.pdf

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

The Honor Pledge: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity by abiding by the Student Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by Students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

A. Cheating. A Student cannot use unauthorized materials or resources in any academic activity for academic advantage or benefit. Cheating includes but is not limited to:

1. Using any materials or resources prepared by another Student without the other Student's express Consent or without proper attribution to the other Student.
2. Using any materials or resources, through any medium, which the Faculty has not given express permission to use and that may confer an academic benefit to the Student.
3. Using additional time, or failing to stop working when instructed, on any time-bound academic activity.
4. Failing to follow the directions of a proctor of any academic activity, when such conduct could lead to an academic advantage or benefit.
5. Collaborating with another person, through any medium, on any academic activity, when Faculty has expressly prohibited collaboration.

B. Complicity in Violating the Student Honor Code. Attempting, aiding, encouraging, facilitating, abetting, conspiring to commit, hiring someone else to commit, giving or receiving bribes to secure, or being a participant (by act or omission) in any act prohibited by the Student Honor Code.

C. False or Misleading Information.

1. A Student must not make a false or misleading statement during the Investigation or resolution of an alleged Student Honor Code violation.
2. A Student must not make a false or misleading statement for the purpose of procuring an improper academic advantage for any Student.
3. A Student must not use or present fabricated information, falsified research, or other findings if the Student knows or reasonably should be aware that the information, research, or other finding is fabricated or falsified.

D. Interference with an Academic Activity.

1. A Student must not take any action or take any material for the purpose of interfering with an academic activity, through any means over any medium.
2. A Student must not be disruptive to the testing environment or other academic activity.

E. Plagiarism. A Student must not represent as the Student's own work all or any portion of the work of another. Plagiarism includes but is not limited to:

1. Stealing, misquoting, insufficiently paraphrasing, or patch-writing.
2. Self-plagiarism, which is the reuse of the Student's own submitted work, or the simultaneous submission of the Student's own work, without the full and clear acknowledgment and permission of the Faculty to whom it is submitted.
3. Submitting materials from any source without proper attribution.
4. Submitting a document, assignment, or material that, in whole or in part, is identical or substantially identical to a document or assignment the Student did not author.

F. Submission of Academic Work Purchased or Obtained from an Outside Source. A Student must not submit as their own work any academic work in any form that the Student purchased or otherwise obtained from an outside source, including but not limited to: academic materials in any form prepared by a commercial or individual vendor of academic materials; a collection of research papers, tests, or academic materials maintained by a Student Organization or other entity or person, or any other sources of academic work.

G. Unauthorized Recordings. A Student must not, without express authorization from Faculty, make or receive any Recording, through any means over any medium, of any

academic activity, including but not limited to a Recording of any class or of any meeting with Faculty. Students registered with the Disability Resource Center who are provided reasonable accommodations that include allowing such Recordings must inform Faculty before making such Recordings.

H. Unauthorized Taking or Receipt of Materials or Resources to Gain an Improper Academic Advantage. A Student, independently or with another person or other people, must not without express authorization take, give, transmit, or receive materials, information, or resources in any manner, through any medium, for the purpose of gaining or providing an improper academic advantage to any Student.

IV. USEFUL LINKS

Canvas

<https://ufl.instructure.com/>

Canvas help: <<http://guides.instructure.com>> You will also see more help options by clicking "help" in the upper right corner of the Canvas homepage. I am not qualified to give tech help for Canvas; if you need help, contact UF's Computing Help Desk: <<http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/>>

Disability Resource Center (DRC)

<https://disability.ufl.edu/>

Counseling and Wellness Center

<https://counseling.ufl.edu/>, (352)392-1575

University Police Department

<https://police.ufl.edu/> (352)392-1111 or 9-1-1 for emergencies

Sexual Harassment/Misconduct Resources

<https://titleix.ufl.edu/full-sexual-harassment-and-misconduct-policy/>

Writing Studio

<https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>

Libraries

<https://www.ufl.edu/academics/libraries/>

LGBTQ Affairs

<https://lgbtq.multicultural.ufl.edu/>

Philosophy at UF:

Philosophy Department

<http://www.phil.ufl.edu/index.html>

Philosophy Discussions – Food and Talk

<http://www.phil.ufl.edu/ugrad/ugrad-food&talk.html>

Undergraduate Philosophy Society

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/8317358197/about/>

Philosophy Major and Minor Requirements

<http://www.phil.ufl.edu/ugrad/ugrad-major.html>

Hare Essay Competition

<http://www.phil.ufl.edu/ugrad.html?page=hare>

Philosophy Research Sources

How to write a good philosophy paper:

<http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/writing.html>

Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://plato.stanford.edu/index.html>

The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

<http://www.iep.utm.edu>

Philosophy Bites Podcast

<http://philosophybites.libsyn.com>

Philosophy of TED Talks

<https://www.ted.com/talks?topics%5B%5D=philosophy>

VI. COURSE SCHEDULE

The source of the reading is indicated by the following abbreviations:

EL – *The Ethical Life* by Russ Shafer-Landau

FE – *The Fundamentals of Ethics* by Russ Shafer-Landau

CN – Canvas

Course Outline* Subject to Change:

WEEK 1 8/21 & 8/23 WELCOME! What is Ethics?

Readings: Introduction [FE]

WEEK 2 8/26, 8/28 & 8/30 Ethics and Reasoning

Readings: Introduction [FE], Stephen Barker, "Improving Your Thinking" [CN]

WEEK 3 9/4 & 9/6 Moral Subjectivism

9/2 NO CLASS – Labor Day

Readings: Chapter 19 – Ethical Relativism [FE], Chapter 15 – The Subjectivity of Values, J.L. Mackie [EL]

WEEK 4 9/9, 9/11, & 9/13

Readings: Chapter 19 – Ethical Relativism [FE], Chapter 17 – Cultural Relativism, Harry Gensler [EL], Wilson, "What's culture got to do with it? Excising the harmful tradition of female circumcision" [CN]

WEEK 5 9/16, 9/18, & 9/20 Morality and Religion I

Readings: *Euthyphro*, Plato [CN], Chapter 7 – Natural Law, St. Thomas Aquinas [EL]
Chapter 5 – Morality and Religion [FE]

WEEK 6 9/23, 9/25, & 9/27 Morality and Religion II

Readings: Burton Leiser, "Is Homosexuality Unnatural?" [CN], Chapter 14 – Moral Distinction Not Derived from Reason, David Hume [EL]

WEEK 7 9/30 & 10/2 Ethical and Psychological Egoism

10/4 NO CLASS – Homecoming

Readings: Chapter 7 – Psychological Egoism [FE], Chapter 8 – Ethical Egoism [FE]

WEEK 8 10/7, 10/9, & 10/11 Consequentialism I

Readings: Chapter 8 – Utilitarianism, John Stuart Mill [EL], Chapter 9 – Consequentialism: Its Nature and Attractions, Chapter 1 – Hedonism, John Stuart Mill [EL]

WEEK 9 10/14, 10/16, & 10/18 Consequentialism II

Readings: Chapter 10 – Consequentialism: Its Difficulties [FE], Chapter 2 – The Experience Machine, Robert Nozick [EL]

WEEK 10 10/21, 10/23, 10/25 Kantian Ethics I

Readings: Chapter 9 – The Good Will and the Categorical Imperative, Immanuel Kant [EL], Chapter 11 – The Kantian Perspective: Fairness and Justice [FE], Chapter 12 – The Kantian Perspective: Autonomy and Respect

WEEK 11 10/28, 10/30, & 11/1 Kantian Ethics II

Readings: same as last week, and Chapter 11 – What Makes Right Acts Right? – W.D. Ross

WEEK 12 11/4, 11/6, & 11/8 Social Contract Theory

Readings: Chapter 10 – Leviathan, Thomas Hobbes [EL], Chapter 13 – The Social Contract Tradition: The Theory and its Attractions [FE], Chapter 14 – The Social Contract Tradition: Problems and Prospects [FE], Letter from the Birmingham City Jail, Martin Luther King Jr. [CN]

Debate 1: Teams 1 & 2 – death penalty, assisted suicide

WEEK 13 11/13 & 11/15 Ethical Pluralism

11/11 NO CLASS – Veterans Day

Readings: Chapter 15 – Ethical Pluralism and Absolute Moral Rules [FE], Chapter 16 – Ethical Pluralism: Prima Facie Duties and Ethical Particularism

WEEK 14 11/18, 11/20, & 11/22 Virtue Ethics

Readings: Chapter 12 – Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle [EL], Chapter 17 – Virtue Ethics [FE], *The Person and the Situation* excerpts, Ross and Nisbett [CN]

Debate 2: Teams 3 & 4 – fake news, racial and gender identity

WEEK 15 11/25

11/27 & 11/29 NO CLASSES – Thanksgiving

In class discussion: how to write a philosophy essay

WEEK 16 12/2 & 12/4 Feminist Ethics and Care Ethics

Readings: Chapter 18 – Feminist Ethics, Hilde Lindemann [EL], Chapter 18 – Feminist Ethics [FE], *Caring Relations and Principles of Justice*, Virginia Held [CN]

Debate 3: Teams 5 & 6 – the opioid crisis, drug decriminalization/legalization

FINAL PAPER DUE 12/6 (TBC)