

**PHI 3641, Sections 11G5, 1602, and 161D (MW)
Conduct, Change, and Consequences: Making Ethical Decisions
Spring 2019**

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Discussion Sections: 11G5 (18573), F3, FLI 0101
1602 (18576), F4, MAT 0010
161D (23496), F6, TUR 2354

Course Description and Objectives

This course is designed to familiarize students with some of the major ethical theories, with ethical issues surrounding innovation, and with some of the psychological obstacles to acting ethically. We will survey the main ethical theories – utilitarianism, deontological ethics, and virtue ethics – to provide a theoretical framework for our discussion of some of the different ethical issues surrounding innovations in fields such as bioengineering and Internet technology. Finally, we will consider how psychological factors inhibit ethical behavior, with an eye towards identifying strategies to combat them.

REQUIREMENTS SATISFIED BY SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE COURSE

Students in this course can earn 4000 words towards the UF Writing Requirement (WR). The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive C or higher for the final course grade as well as a C or higher on the writing component of the course.

PHI 3641 satisfies the Ethics requirement for the Innovation Minor, serves as an elective for the Philosophy major or minor, and is a General Education – Humanities (H).

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 3641 accomplishes these goals by familiarizing students with key ethical theories, such as utilitarianism, deontological ethics, and virtue ethics as well as objections to them. With these theories as their framework, students will consider technological innovations and become adept at

identifying the aspects of such innovations that raise ethical issues. We will consider and critically evaluate arguments for and against certain practices, such as germ-line engineering, through an ethical lens. Finally, PHI 3641 delves into some of the psychological and social pressures that inhibit ethical behavior with an eye towards identifying strategies for combatting them and promoting ethical behavior.

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 key ethical theories and some of their difficulties, the ability to identify features of a new technology or innovation likely to give rise to ethical issues, and the ability to identify and to anticipate inhibitors of ethical behavior. The COMMUNICATION SLO will be achieved by three short writing assignments (600-800 words each), two papers (1100-1500 words each), two exams, and regular participation in class. Students will be required to explain various ethical theories and to evaluate them and then to use these theories to evaluate the ethical appropriateness of some innovative practices. Students will also demonstrate achievement of the CRITICAL THINKING SLO through the short writing assignments and papers, 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 and evaluate traditional ethical theories
- Apply those theories to ethical questions and issues, especially those concerning innovations
- Analyze, evaluate, construct, and present persuasive arguments for particular ethical positions
- Identify and describe some inhibitors to ethical behavior

Required Texts

Shafer-Landau, Russ. 2015. *The Fundamentals of Ethics*, 4th edition. (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Various articles on Canvas, accessible in the 'Readings' folder, located in the 'Files' folder. Websites where some of these can be found also appear in the syllabus, under the 'Meetings and Readings' section. *I highly recommend that you print these out and bring them to class, as I refer to them frequently and expect you to answer specific questions about the texts.*

Recommended texts and resources

On writing well generally: Strunk, William and E.B. White. *The Elements of Style*, 4th edition. (Pearson, 1999).

The full text can be found here:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxicmVhdG9uc2V3YzR1fGd4OjQ1MmU3OWFiNzAzZTk2M2M>

On writing a philosophy paper:

Pryor, Jim. "A Brief Guide to Writing a Philosophy paper" (2008).

The pdf is available in the 'Writing Information' folder under 'Files' on Canvas, but it can also be found here:

http://philosophy.fas.harvard.edu/files/phildept/files/brief_guide_to_writing_philosophy_paper.pdf

University Writing Program:

The writing service offers one-on-one service with a tutor who will help students learn to become better writers and editors. It is free for all current UF students. Please see <https://writing.ufl.edu> for more information.

Evaluation

- 3 Short Writing Assignments (SWAs), each 600-800 words long and worth 10 points. These will be short argumentative essays, in which you will explain an ethical theory or a potential innovative practice and develop and defend a position of your own regarding it.
 - Due dates: Wednesday, February 5th
Monday, March 16th
Friday, April 17th
- 2 Argumentative Essays (AEs), each 1100-1500 words long and worth 25 points. These will be longer argumentative essays where you will offer more extended analysis of an ethical theory or a potential innovative practice, which will involve defending a position of your own AND responding to some potential objections.
 - Due dates: Friday, February 28th
Monday, April 6th
- 2 proctored non-cumulative exams, each worth 10 points. The first exam will cover ethical theories, and the second will concern those theories and their application to innovations as well as inhibitors to moral behavior.
 - Exam days: Monday, February 24th (in class)
Monday, April 20th (in class)

Further things to note:

- (1) Course grades have two components. To receive writing requirement credit, a student must receive a C or higher for the final course grade as well as a C or higher on the writing component of the course. The writing component is determined by your scores on clarity and mechanics for all writing assignments.

- (2) We will evaluate and provide feedback on all written assignments with respect to grammar, punctuation, clarity, coherence, and organization.
- (3) You will frequently be assigned a new writing assignment very soon after turning another one in. Don't let this stress you out. The point is to provide you as much time as possible to work on the assignments and to better balance your other commitments.
 - Notice that AE 1 is due near the midterm exam, and SWA 3 is due near the final exam. Plan accordingly.
- (4) No short writing assignment (SWA) or argumentative essay (AE) will be accepted after its due date without penalty except by 24-hour prior arrangement with the instructor, Dr. Palmer, or a **documented** university approved excuse.

UF's policy: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/1516/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

The penalty for late writing assignments is as follows: points equaling a full letter grade deduction will be subtracted from your grade *for each day the assignment is late*. Lesser deductions will apply to assignments turned in less than 24 hours after the due date. *No writing assignment will be accepted 4 days after the due date*.

- (5) There will be no make-up exams except by specific arrangement with the instructor, Dr. Palmer, a minimum of one week prior to the scheduled exam date or a **documented** university approved excuse.
- (6) All papers will be submitted through Canvas and subject to anti-plagiarism detection via Turnitin software. Furthermore, we've discovered numerous cases of plagiarism that Turnitin has missed, including cases where students have modified papers found on sites such as Course Hero, and turned them in as their own. Any suspected act of academic dishonesty is reported to the Dean's Office, which prevents students from dropping courses in cases of suspected academic dishonesty. *Plagiarism or cheating on any assignment will automatically result in a 0 for the assignment and possibly a grade of "E" for the course. If you have any questions about how to cite properly, don't hesitate to get in touch.* We're happy to assist you.
- (7) We strongly recommend that you **not** use outside sources for any of the writing assignments. This is for four reasons.
 - a. Grades for writing assignments have a Comprehension component that requires you to show proficiency with the course material, specifically the texts assigned for class and the information conveyed in lecture and discussion. Students who rely on outside sources frequently fail to properly focus on this information, and their grades suffer as a result.
 - b. Some students are tempted to use outside sources when they're having difficulty understanding the material. However, if you find yourself in this situation, outside sources frequently don't help. This is because many of these sources are professional and are pitched at a different audience. So you may find them more confusing than helpful, which will affect your writing. Although I don't want to dissuade you from looking at other sources for your edification, please be careful and don't hesitate to discuss the material or your ideas with us.
 - c. Although there are many reputable sources, many are disreputable as well, especially online sources. It can be difficult to tell which sources are reliable and which are not without already being very familiar with the material.

- d. There is a higher risk of inadvertently plagiarizing. When writing, it's good to be focused on the ideas and lines of argument. But it's also easy to lose track of the sources of your information and to fail to cite when you should. If this happens with class material, then we know where the information is coming from, and there's usually little concern that you're representing someone else's work as your own. However, *this is not the case with outside sources*. **If you fail to identify an outside source, then, whether you intend or not, you are representing someone else's work as your own, and that's plagiarism.** See the section of the syllabus on Academic Dishonesty for more on this.

The table below provides the grading scale for this course as well as the corresponding grade values. For more on UF's grading policy, see:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>.

Grade Scale	Grade Value
100-93 = A	A = 4.0
92-90 = A-	A- = 3.67
89-86 = B+	B+ = 3.33
85-82 = B	B = 3.00
81-79 = B-	B- = 2.67
78-76 = C+	C+ = 2.33
75-72 = C	C = 2.00
71-69 = C-	C- = 1.67
68-66 = D+	D+ = 1.33
65-62 = D	D = 1.00
61-60 = D-	D- = 0.67
59-0 = E	E = 0.00

Course Policies

Attendance: Regular attendance is very important. Failing to attend regularly results in missing explanations and discussions about the material and lost opportunities to ask questions, to check your understanding, and to try out potential lines of objections and responses. Students who miss out on these inevitably receive lower grades – often significantly lower – than their classmates who attend regularly.

There will be a daily attendance sheet that we expect you to sign.

Electronic Devices: No electronics are permitted in the classroom, since they are often a distraction and have been shown to negatively affect learning. There are various sources documenting this. See, for example, <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/news/using-laptops-in-class-harms-academic-performance-study-warns> and <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/students-are-better-off-without-a-laptop-in-the-classroom/>

Tardiness: As a courtesy to your classmates, your teaching assistants, and me, please be on time. Should your tardiness become a problem, I reserve the right to ask you to leave and to not allow you to sign the attendance sheet.

Online Course Evaluation: Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

Academic Dishonesty

All students must conform to the policies of UF's honor code regarding cheating, plagiarism, and the use of copyrighted materials (see: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>). *Plagiarism or cheating on any assignment will automatically result in a 0 for the assignment and possibly a grade of "E" for the course.* Any suspected act of academic dishonesty is reported to the Dean's Office, which prevents students from dropping courses in cases of suspected academic dishonesty.

Let me say a word about plagiarism, since by far it's the most common honor code violation that I've encountered. Plagiarism is defined in the University of Florida's Student Honor Code as follows:

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

You're responsible for ensuring that you're familiar with the Honor Code and don't run afoul of it. The easiest way to avoid plagiarism, for example, is to ensure that you cite your sources. This is especially important if you use outside sources for the writing assignments. Please note, however, that *we strongly recommend that you refrain from using outside sources in your writing assignments. If you're uncertain how to cite properly, let us know, and we'll be happy to assist you.*

CANVAS E-learning Environment

This course is supplemented by online content in the e-Learning environment known as "Canvas." You can log in to Canvas and access the course site at <http://elearning.ufl.edu/>. If you encounter any difficulties logging in or accessing any of the course content, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at (352) 392-4537. Do not contact the course instructor regarding computer issues.

- Pdf readings are in 'Readings' folder under the 'Files' tab.
- Check the 'Assignments' tab for paper assignments and short writing assignments.
- Check the 'Announcements' tab for new course content and general information.

If you encounter any difficulties logging in or accessing any of the course content, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at (352) 392-4537. Do not contact the course instructor regarding computer issues

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center by visiting disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started or by calling 352-392-8565. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester. Please be aware that accommodations are not retroactive. Hence, you should contact the office as soon as possible in the term for which you are seeking accommodations. Please also don't hesitate to contact me during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed.

Counseling and Wellness Center

UF provides counseling and other kinds of help for students in distress. You can call the on-campus Counseling and Wellness Center at **352-392-1575** and see their website at <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>.

The "U Matter, We Care" program provides resources for everyone in the UF community. See the website at umatter.ufl.edu/. Students can contact umatter@ufl.edu seven days a week for assistance for students in distress. There is also a phone number for this program: **(352) 294-CARE**.

Meetings and Readings

Read all assigned material carefully before coming to class. **Make sure to read the article for each class that it is assigned:** i.e. if an article is assigned for more than one class, read it before *each* class during which we'll be discussing it. Be prepared to bring up any questions or objections you have and to join in a general discussion.

Introductory matters and Autonomous Vehicles

Monday, January 6th – Syllabus/Intro to Ethics

Wednesday, January 8th – (1) Lin's "The Ethics of Autonomous Cars" (pdf)
 (2) Green's "Autonomous Vehicles could cost America 5 million jobs. What should we do about it?" (pdf)

Friday, January 10th – Discussion section

Monday, January 13th – Awad, Dsouza et al. "The Moral Machine Experiment" (pdf)

Wednesday, January 15th – Johnson's "Self-driving cars will have to decide who should live and who should die. Here's who humans would kill"

Friday, January 17th – Discussion section
Optional: take the Moral Machine Survey at <http://moralmachine.mit.edu/>

Monday, January 20th – NO CLASS

Wednesday, January 22nd – Shafer-Landau (*hereafter SL*) Introduction, especially
“Moral Reasoning” pp. 9-16

Friday, January 24th – Discussion section

Ethical Theory

Ethical Relativism

Monday, January 27th – SL chapter 19, “Ethical Relativism”

Wednesday, January 29th – SL chapter 19, “Ethical Relativism”

Friday, January 31st – Discussion section

Monday, February 3rd – Pryor’s “A Brief Guide to Writing the Philosophy Paper” (pdf)
found under the Writing Information folder in Files.
Discussion of SWA 1

Consequentialism

Wednesday, February 5th – SL Chapter 9, “Consequentialism: its Nature and Attractions”
*****SWA 1 DUE*****

Friday, February 7th – Discussion section

Monday, February 10th – SL Chapter 10, “Consequentialism: its Difficulties”

Deontological Ethics

Wednesday, February 12th – SL Chapter 11, “The Kantian Perspective: Fairness and
Justice”

Friday, February 14th – Discussion section

Monday, February 17th – SL Chapter 12, “The Kantian Perspective: Autonomy and
Respect”

Practicum

Wednesday, February 19th – Catch up/Midterm review

Friday, February 21st – Discussion section: Midterm review/paper writing

Monday, February 24th – **Midterm Exam**

Wednesday, February 26th – Paper Writing + Peer Review: Bring drafts of paper 1 to
class

Friday, February 28th – Discussion section: *****AE 1 Due*****

March 3rd - March 7th: SPRING BREAK

Virtue Ethics

Monday, March 9th – SL Chapter 17, “Virtue Ethics”
Wednesday, March 11th – SL Chapter 17, “Virtue Ethics”
Friday, March 13th – Discussion section

Applied Topics

Google: moderating search results

Monday, March 16th – (1) Grind, Schechner, McMillan, and West’s (*The Wall Street Journal*) “How Google Interferes with its Search Algorithms and Changes your Results” (pdf)
(2) Google’s Blacklisting Criteria (abridged version available as pdf):
<https://www.google.com/search/howsearchworks/mission/open-web/>

Recommended: *The Economist’s* “Google Rewards Reputable Reporting, not Left-Wing Politics” (pdf)

*****SWA 2 Due*****

Wednesday, March 18th – (1) Noble’s (*Time*) “Google’s Algorithm has a Striking History of Bias Against Black Girls” (pdf)
(2) Illing’s (Vox) “How Search Engines are Making us more Racist,” interview with Safiya Noble (pdf)
(3) Milikh (The Heritage Foundation) “How Big Tech uses ‘Freedom of Expression’ to Quash Free Speech” (pdf)

Recommended: Marantz’ (*The New Yorker*) “The Dark Side of Techno-Utopianism”(pdf)
Gillespie’s (*Wired*) “How Social Networks set the Limits of what we can Say Online” (pdf)

Friday, March 20th – Discussion section

Germ-line Engineering

Monday, March 23rd – Savulesco’s “New Breeds of Humans: the Moral Obligation to Enhance” (pdf)

Wednesday, March 25th – Savulesco’s “New Breeds of Humans: the Moral Obligation to Enhance” (pdf)

Friday, March 27th – Discussion section

Monday, March 30th – Sandel’s “The Case Against Perfection” (pdf)

Wednesday, April 1st – Sandel’s “The Case Against Perfection” (pdf)

Friday, April 3rd – Discussion section

Ethical Inhibitors

Obedience and authority

Monday, April 6th – Milgram’s “Behavioral Study of Obedience” (pdf)

*****AE 2 Due*****

Wednesday, April 8th – (1) Ross and Nisbett’s “Putting it all together: Stanley Milgrim and the Banality of Evil” (pdf)

(2) American Psychological Association’s “Obeying and Resisting Malevolent Orders” (pdf)

Friday, April 10th – Discussion section

Nonrational Factors influencing ethical decision making

Monday, April 13th – Rogerson and et al., “Nonrational Processes in Ethical Decision Making” (pdf)

Wednesday, April 15th – Rogerson and et al., “Nonrational Processes in Ethical Decision Making” (pdf)

Friday, April 17th – Discussion section: Wrap Up/Discussion of Final Exam
SWA 3 Due

Monday, April 20th – **Final Exam**

Wednesday, April 22nd – NO CLASS