

## Contemporary Moral Issues—PHI2630

Instructor: Dr. Lyndal Grant
Email: <a href="mailto:l.grant@ufl.edu">l.grant@ufl.edu</a>
Classes: M,W,F 11.45PM- 12.35PM (Matherly Hall 0117)
Office hours: M, W 3.00PM-4.00PM (or by appointment) Office location: 115C Griffin-Floyd Hall (FLO)

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course serves as an introduction to philosophical thinking about contemporary moral topics. In addition to briefly exploring frameworks for ethical thinking, we will consider the following questions: Is abortion morally permissible? Is it okay to eat meat produced on factory farms? Do we have a right to free speech, and what would such a right demand? How should resources be distributed in a fair society? Is taxation permissible? Students should expect several writing assignments of increasing length over the course of the semester.

The main aim of this course is to have you think about these and related questions in a philosophically rigorous way. This means formulating arguments, articulating opposing views, and above all, thinking critically.

**REQUIRED TEXT AND READINGS:** No purchase of books is necessary for this course. All assigned readings will be available through the class Canvas page.

### **COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

- Identify, describe and explain the major arguments and views in philosophical work on a variety of issues in applied ethics.
- Discern the structure of arguments, represent them fairly and clearly, and evaluate them
- Formulate original arguments, anticipating objections and responding in a conscientious fashion.
- Read and discuss complex philosophical texts from contemporary works.
- Speak and write clearly about abstract and complex matters.

### **COMMUNICATION POLICY**

**Announcements:** Course announcements will be posted on Canvas. You are responsible for checking Canvas at least once a week to make sure that you do not miss important announcements.

**CONTACTING DR. GRANT:** Feel free to reach out directly by email or come to office hours—I'm here to help!

- Email is the most reliable way to get in touch with me outside of class.
- I make effort to respond to email from students within two (2) business days. Note that emails do sometimes get lost—due to spam filtering, for instance. Please do send me another email or come up to me after class if you do not hear back within two business days. I promise I am not ignoring you intentionally!

### **CLASS CONDUCT & CLASS ATTENDANCE POLICY:**

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Doing philosophy well requires treating others' views seriously and interpreting them charitably. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities.

Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. **I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun.** Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records.

- You are allowed two unexcused absences without penalty. If you need to miss class for any reason, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can discuss whether the absence will be excused and what sort of documentation will be necessary (if applicable).
- Each unexcused absence beyond the first two will result in a deduction from your participation grade.
- Poor conduct in class will also result in a deduction from your participation grade. Examples of poor conduct include disruptive behavior, falling asleep, sending text messages, checking email, etc.

<p><b>IF YOU SUSPECT YOU ARE SICK, PLEASE DO NOT COME TO CLASS</b></p>
--

- Students who suspect they are ill or who have been excluded from campus due to illness will receive an excused absence (in addition to my gratitude for not putting others at risk!)

### **COURSE REQUIREMENTS & ASSIGNMENTS**

#### **Writing Requirement**

This course is marked 'WR', and is designated to satisfy 4,000 words of Writing Requirement credit. 4,000 words amounts to approximately 17 pages of writing (12 point font, double-spaced, one-inch margins). Needless to say, there will be more writing in this course than you may be accustomed to. The Writing Requirement (WR) ensures students both maintain their fluency in writing and use writing as a tool to facilitate learning. Here are some links to the official UF statements about the WR:

<http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/writing-requirement.aspx>

<http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/wr-course-guidelines.aspx>  
<http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/writing-requirement-syllabus-policy.aspx>  
<http://gened.aa.ufl.edu/sample-writing-assessment-rubric.aspx>

The writing course grade assigned by the instructor has two components: the writing component and a course grade. Therefore, to receive writing credit a student must satisfactorily complete the writing component (by averaging 72% on the cumulative essay assignments) and receive a minimum grade of C (2.0) for the course. In other words, getting a C for the course is *necessary* but *not sufficient* for getting the WR credit.

It is possible to not meet the writing requirement and still earn a minimum grade of C in a class, so students should review their degree audit after receiving their grade to verify receipt of credit for the writing component.

A few key things to note about the WR (quoting the “course guidelines” page, linked above):

- Written assignments that count toward the University of Florida Writing Requirement should contain extended analysis and develop original, sophisticated ideas, not merely present hastily written or cursory thoughts. UF Writing Requirement assignments should include such elements as well-crafted paragraphs, a thesis or hypothesis, a persuasive organizational structure (e.g., introduction, body, conclusion; introduction, methods, results, discussion), well-supported claims, and appropriate and effective stylistic elements.
- Writing will be evaluated based on the content, organization and coherence, effectiveness, style, grammar, and punctuation. I will provide a detailed rubric that shows how I will evaluate assignments using these criteria. See the course website for detailed assignment instructions and for the WR rubric.
- Feedback on all assignments will be provided by the last day of class, or, if provided electronically, by the end of finals.
- In-class writing assignments, quizzes, class notes, in-class essay examinations may not be counted toward the 4,000 words.

### **Participation (15%)**

Philosophy is a group activity that depends on conversation and discussion. There is no way to do this entirely on your own. In order for this class to function well everyone needs to do the reading *before the relevant lecture*. Lectures will presuppose that you have done the reading. However, there is no expectation that you will have *understood* the reading prior to lecture. That’s what class and our discussions are for, and even then, we will probably still have questions.

Your participation grade is based on how prepared you are for class on a regular basis, your willingness to participate by contributing questions and comments while responding to others in a respectful and attentive way, and the quality of your comments.

You are encouraged to participate in lecture. You are expected to participate in discussion section, and the discussion grade for the course will be calculated from your contribution to discussion section. To do well, you should demonstrate consistent, high-quality participation. *High-quality* contributions to discussion are *informed* (i.e., show evidence of having done assigned work), *thoughtful* (i.e., show evidence of having understood and considered issues raised in readings and other discussions), and *considerate* (e.g., take the perspectives of others into account).

Grade	Criteria
A	1. Student makes consistent, high quality contributions to class discussion. 2. Student is present and ready when class begins, remains alert and focused on the class discussion the entire period, keeps electronic devices silenced and off the desktop, and only begins packing belongings when class is over..
B	1. Student is often an active participant in class discussion whose contributions are sometimes of high quality. 2. Student is present and ready when class begins, remains alert and focused on the class discussion the entire period, keeps electronic devices silenced and off the desktop, and only begins packing belongings when class is over.
C	1. Student is an active listener of class discussion but is mostly silent. 2. Student is present and ready when class begins, remains alert and focused on the class discussion the entire period, keeps electronic devices silenced and off the desktop, and only begins packing belongings when class is over.
D	1. Student is disruptive of class space or conversation, either actively or passively. 2. Student is disrespectful of other students or instructors.
E	1. Student fails to participate in any non-trivial way.

You will receive a letter grade for participation representing the overall quality of your participation in the above activities over the course of the semester.

Lecture attendance is required. See “Class Conduct and Attendance Policy” above.

Note that the “Roll Call Attendance” grade that Canvas automatically generates does not represent your Participation grade in the class.

### **Perusall Assignments (10%):**

To help you stay on top of the readings there will be weekly assignments on Perusall. Perusall is an online platform that allows you to annotate readings. Each week, you will be expected to annotate one of the readings for the week in Perusall. Your grade for these assignments will be determined by the overall level of quality of your annotations. You can access Perusall and the relevant readings through our Canvas site.

### **Essay Assignments (total 75%):**

You will be required to write three essays for this course. Detailed essay instructions and prompts will be distributed two weeks prior to the due date of the essay assignment.

**Essay #1:** This essay will be a minimum of 900 words and a maximum of 1200 words. Due Date: 11:59pm on **February 17<sup>th</sup>** (subject to change, with notice). This essay will be submitted electronically, via an Assignment link on Canvas.  
***Worth 20% of your final grade.***

**Essay #2:** This essay will be a minimum of 1300 words and a maximum of 1500 words. Due Date: 11:59pm on **March 24<sup>th</sup>** (subject to change, with notice). This essay will be submitted electronically, via an Assignment link on Canvas.  
***Worth 25% of your final grade.***

**Essay #3:** This essay will be a minimum of 1800 words and a maximum of 2000 words. Due Date: 11:59pm on **April 26<sup>th</sup>** (subject to change, with notice). This essay will be submitted electronically, via an Assignment link on Canvas.  
***Worth 30% of your final grade.***

## GRADE SCALE

This course will use the following grade scale:

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

Grades that fall exactly on the upper threshold are awarded the higher grade. Further information on UF's grading policy can be found at [catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx](https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx).

**ESSAY SUBMISSION AND LATE SUBMISSION POLICY:** In general, requirements for section attendance, assignments, and other work are consistent with university policies specified at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

More specifically, the following policies will be adhered to:

1. All assignments will be submitted online via an Assignment/Turnitin.com link on the course's Canvass page. Essays must be submitted as either .doc or .docx files. Failure to submit in these formats will result in penalties and will require resubmission in the proper format.
2. Late submission of papers will be penalized 3% for each day that the assignment is late. For instance, if a paper is due on Friday at 5:00pm, it will be counted as 1 day late if submitted between 5:01pm Friday and 5:00pm Saturday (submissions between 5:01pm Saturday and 5:00pm Sunday will count as 2 days late, and so on). Late submissions will be made via Canvas/Turnitin.

**COURSE WEBSITE:** This course is supplemented by online content in the e-Learning environment known as "Canvas." To login to the e-Learning site for this course, go to <https://elearning.ufl.edu/>, click the e-Learning in Canvas button, and on the next page enter your Gatorlink username and password. You can then access the course e-Learning environment by

selecting PHH2630 from the Courses pull-down menu at the top of the page. If you encounter any difficulties logging in or accessing any of the course content, contact the UF Computing Help Desk at (352) 392-4537.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

### **ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

Electronic devices—including phones, computers, tablets, and recording devices—should be silenced during class.

Laptop and cellphone use is prohibited in this class. Tablet use is acceptable, as tablets mitigate distractions to other students.

Students are allowed by law to record video or audio of class lectures. If you choose to do this, please set it up prior to class start time. The purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. A student who circulates a recording, even to another student in the course, without written consent of the instructor may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code.

### **ACADEMIC HONESTY**

All sources and assistance used in preparing your papers and presentations must be precisely and explicitly acknowledged. Please review the guidelines on attribution and plagiarism found here: <https://guides.uflib.ufl.edu/copyright/plagiarism>. The web creates special risks here. Cutting and pasting even a few words from a web page or paraphrasing material without a reference constitutes plagiarism. If you are not sure how to refer to something you find on the internet, you can always give the URL.

Students are not permitted to use large language models (such as ChatGPT) or other AI-based text generation tools to complete written assignments for this course. Submitting work produced using one of these tools without prior written authorization constitutes academic dishonesty.

You should expect the minimum penalty for academic dishonesty to be a grade of E for the class (not just the assignment). All incidents of academic dishonesty will be reported to Student Judicial Affairs. Repeat offenders may be penalized by suspension or expulsion from the university.

**HONOR CODE:** UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the 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.” The Honor Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions; for more information see this page: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>. You are obligated to report any condition that facilitates academic misconduct to appropriate personnel. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with me or your TA.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the disability Resource Center: <https://disability.ufl.edu/students/get-started/> . 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.

**COURSE EVALUATIONS:** You will be asked twice to evaluate the course: once midway through the semester (this is the “midterm” evaluation) and once at the end of the semester (this is the “end-of-semester” evaluation). The midterm evaluation is designed to help me address any problems with the course while there is still time for you to benefit from your suggestions; thus, the evaluations will not be shared publicly. The evaluation at the end of the semester will be used for additional purposes and the data will be shared on the University website. For the official evaluation, you 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 is here: <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/students/>. You will be notified when the official evaluation period opens, and you can complete evaluations through the email you receive from GatorEvals, in your Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via [ufl.bluera.com/ufl/](http://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to you here: <https://gatorevals.ua.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

#### **ACADEMIC RESOURCES:**

- E-Learning Technical Support: <http://helpdesk.ufl.edu/> . Contact them via phone at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).
- Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601. Career assistance and counseling services, <https://career.ufl.edu/>
- Library Support: See <https://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/ask>.
- Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420. General study skills and tutoring. <https://teachingcenter.ufl.edu/>
- Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138. Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers. <https://writing.ufl.edu/writing-studio/>
- Student Complaints On-Campus: <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/studenthonor-%20code-student-conduct-code/>
- On-Line Students Complaints: <https://distance.ufl.edu/gettinghelp/student-complaint-process/>

#### **HEALTH AND WELLNESS RESOURCES:**

- U Matter, We Care: If you or someone you know is in distress, please contact [umatter@ufl.edu](mailto:umatter@ufl.edu), 352-392-1575, or visit <https://umatter.ufl.edu/> to refer or report a concern and a team member will reach out to the student in distress.
- Counseling and Wellness Center: Call 352-392-1575 for information on crisis and non-crisis services or visit <https://counseling.ufl.edu/>.
- Student Health Care Center: Call 352-392-1161 for 24/7 information to help you find the care you need, or visit <https://shcc.ufl.edu/>.
- University Police Department: Go to <https://police.ufl.edu/> or call 352-392-1111 (or 9-1-1 for emergencies).
- UF Health Shands Emergency Room / Trauma Center: For immediate medical care call 352-733-0111 or go to the emergency room at 1515 SW Archer Road.

## CLASS AND READING SCHEDULE

*This schedule is subject to revision- please read all class announcements in Canvas.*

### WEEK 1

Jan 9<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup>

- Shafer-Landau. “Consequentialism: Its Nature and Attractions”

### WEEK 2

Jan 16<sup>th</sup>- 20<sup>th</sup> (No class Monday 16<sup>th</sup>)

- Nozick, Robert. “The Experience Machine.” In *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*.
- Singer, Peter. “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”

### WEEK 3

Jan 23<sup>rd</sup>- 27<sup>th</sup>

- Narveson, Jan. “Feeding the Hungry”
- Timmerman, Travis. “Sometimes there is nothing wrong with letting a child drown”

### WEEK 4

Jan 30<sup>th</sup>- Feb 3<sup>rd</sup>

- Mill, John Stuart. “Introductory” Chapter 1 in *On Liberty*.
- Mill, John Stuart. “Of the Liberty of Thought and Discussion” Chapter 2 in *On Liberty*.

### WEEK 5

Feb 6<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup>

- Harris, John. “The Survival Lottery” *Philosophy* 50, no. 191 (1975): 81–7.
- Nozick, Robert. “Moral Goals and Moral Constraints” In *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*

### WEEK 6

Feb 13<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>

- Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. pp. 149–64, 167–74, and 235–8.
- Nozick, Robert. *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*. pp. 150–3, and 174–82.

### WEEK 7

Feb 20<sup>th</sup>-24<sup>th</sup>

- Cohen, G. A. “Self-Ownership, Freedom, and Equality.” pp. 112–5, 67–80, and 94–105.
- Nozick, Robert. “Voluntary Exchange” In *Anarchy, State, and Utopia*.



### **WEEK 8**

**Feb 27<sup>th</sup>- March 3<sup>rd</sup>**

- Cohen, G. A. “Are Disadvantaged Workers Who Take Hazardous Jobs Forced to Take Hazardous Jobs?” Sections 2–5 in *History, Labour, and Freedom: Themes from Marx*.

### **WEEK 9**

**March 6<sup>th</sup>- 10<sup>th</sup>**

- Rawls, John. Selections from Sections 1–4, 11–3, 17, 24, 26, and 29. In *A Theory of Justice*.
- Rawls, John. Selections from Sections 43–44, and 47–48. In *A Theory of Justice*.

*Spring Break*

### **WEEK 10**

**March 20<sup>th</sup>- 24<sup>th</sup>**

- Singer, Peter. “All Animals are Equal”
- Norcross, Alistair. “Puppies, Pigs and People: Eating Meat and Marginal Cases”

### **WEEK 11**

**March 27<sup>th</sup>- 31<sup>st</sup>**

- Thomson, Judith Jarvis. “A Defense of Abortion”

### **WEEK 12**

**April 3<sup>rd</sup>- 7<sup>th</sup>**

- Marquis, Don. “Why Abortion is Immoral”

### **WEEK 13**

**April 10<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup>**

- Schouten, Gina. “Fetuses, Orphans, and a Famous Violinist”
- Harman, Elizabeth. “What Amy Coney Barrett Doesn’t Understand About Abortion.” *The New York Daily News*.

**WEEK 14**

April 17<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup>

- Shelby, Tommie. "Justice, Deviance, and the Dark Ghetto." *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 35, no. 2 (2007): 126–60.

**WEEK 15**

April 24<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>