

# **PHH 3650 (sec. 3501): Moral Philosophy**

## **Fall 2024**

Time: Tuesdays 1:55- 2:45 and Thursdays 1:55 - 3:50

Location: Matherly Hall 0115

Instructor: Dr. Jan Maximilian Robitzsch

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Office Hours: Thursdays 8:30-10:30 or by appointment

### **I. Course Description**

Imagine that a friend calls you. Because you are watching a movie and do not want to be disturbed, you decide not to answer. The next day the friend asks you why you did not answer the phone. Knowing that the friend would be upset that you did not take the call, is it permissible to tell the friend that your phone died? And generally, is it ever permissible to tell a lie? The area of philosophy that deals with this question and others pertaining to right or wrong moral conduct (as well as more broadly how we ought to live our lives) is moral philosophy or ethics. It is the topic of this course that will discuss in detail the three main theories of normative ethics (consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics) drawing both on historical and contemporary sources.

PHH 3650 is required of all Philosophy majors and meets an area requirement for the Philosophy minor. This course is a Humanities (H) subject area course in the UF General Education Program and a General Education Core Course in Humanities. A minimum grade of C is required for credit toward the Philosophy major or minor and for general education credit.

### **II. Learning Outcomes**

In this class, students will learn to

- discern the structure of arguments to represent them fairly and clearly and to evaluate them for cogency.
- formulate original arguments, anticipating objections and responding in a conscientious fashion.
- read and discuss complex philosophical texts from historical and contemporary sources.
- speak and write clearly and persuasively about abstract and conceptually elusive matters.

### **III. General Education Outcomes and Learning Objectives**

This course is a Humanities (H) subject area course in the UF General Education Program and a General Education Core Course in Humanities. Humanities courses must afford students the ability to think critically through the mastering of subjects concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy, and must include selections from the Western canon. 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 relevant factors 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.

PHH 3650 accomplishes these goals by familiarizing students with historical texts that are foundational for the three main theories of moral philosophy: consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. These historical texts are supplemented by contemporary readings that further develop, critically engage with, or apply the ideas first articulated in the historical readings. Students will thus come to understand three different theories that answer the questions “What we should do?” and “How we should live our life?”

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 these SLO's by: (i) preparing reading responses on central ideas and arguments in the philosophical works being read in the class that will serve as the basis for class discussion; (ii) participating actively in the small-group and full-class discussions, in which students will consider the effectiveness of their fellow students' ideas and reasoning; (iii) writing on assigned topics designed to test students' critical thinking abilities; and (iv) taking a final exam designed to test students' competent command of the course content.

#### **IV. Required Texts**

- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*. Trans. Reeve. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 2014. ISBN: 1624661173.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*. Trans. Ellington. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 1993. ISBN: 087220166X.
- Mill, John Stuart. *Utilitarianism*. Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 2001. ISBN: 087220605X.

All other readings will be made available on Canvas, an e-Learning Environment.

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.

#### **V. Expectations**

Students who take this class for credit should

- be respectful of fellow students and the instructor.
- read all the assigned texts for the session and be prepared for discussion.
- submit all assignments in a timely fashion.
- attend class regularly and be on time.

- bring a copy of the week's reading to class (discuss exceptions with me).
- participate in group work and class discussions.
- refrain from eating during class (discuss exceptions with me).
- refrain from using cell phones and computers in class (discuss exceptions with me).

## VI. Attendance Policy

Attending class is an integral part of this course; philosophical skills are best honed in community with others. Therefore, students should make an effort to attend all meetings. If students have to miss class, they are encouraged to come to office hours and schedule a meeting with the instructor to catch up on material they missed. **Note that all class meetings are in person, except for 9/24 and 9/26, which will be conducted virtually.** (A link and more precise information will be provided at a later point.)

**Students may miss six 50-minute periods in the semester without any effect on their grade. Students who have to miss more than these six periods should contact the instructor as soon as possible. Each absence, beyond the initial six periods, will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Acceptable reasons for missing class (beyond the six periods) that will not affect a student's grade may include, but are not limited to, illness; serious emergencies concerning the student, friends, or families; participation in official curricular or extracurricular school events; and religious holidays. Unexcused absences, by contrast, will result in a 25-point penalty (see also the section "VII. Evaluation" below).**

**The exception to the above policy is the first class meeting on 8/22, the attendance of which is mandatory. If a student misses this class, the student must meet with the instructor to go over the things missed.** Missing class on 8/22 will not count towards the maximum number of permitted absences.

If students come late to class regularly or come very late to class, the instructor reserves the right to count the lateness as an absence.

Requirements for all make-up work is consistent with university policies specified at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>.

## VII. Evaluation

The final course grade will be based on the following six components (adding up to 1000 points total):

- Class Participation (10% = 100 points)
- Reading Posts (10% = 100 points = 20 x 5 points)
- First Paper (15% = 150 points)
- Second Paper (20% = 200 points)
- Third Paper (20% = 200 points)
- Final Exam (25% = 250 points)

## Reading Posts

Prior to most class meetings, students will be required to post a short reading reflection (1-2 times per week). These have the following function:

- (1) They help students engage with the philosophical texts to be discussed in class.
- (2) They give students an opportunity to practice writing in a low-pressure environment.
- (3) They facilitate exchange among students outside of the classroom.
- (4) They give the instructor feedback on what students thought was interesting about a particular reading.
- (5) They allow the instructor to give students individual feedback on their philosophical ideas and questions.

These posts consist of a short note (of about 100 words) on the week's readings. Posts should substantially engage with the philosophical ideas of the assigned readings. They could:

- ask for clarification in regard to certain ideas, arguments, or concepts in the reading,
- comment on ideas, arguments, or concepts in the reading,
- raise an objection against an idea or argument in the reading,
- draw comparisons between ideas in the reading and ideas in other readings (from class or that students encountered in a different context),
- draw connections between the reading and some contemporary phenomenon, etc.

Posts for any given week have to be submitted **by the day before class by midnight** via Canvas, starting August 26. Example the reading response for class on Tuesday, August 27, is due Monday, August 26 at midnight; the reading response for class on Thursday, October 10, is Wednesday October 9 at midnight; etc. **Late responses will not receive credit.**

Posts will be graded for content and completion, with emphasis on the latter: Students are not expected to master a reading, but to show that they substantially engaged with it before coming to class. Each reading response will be worth 5 points. (NB that there are 22 opportunities to submit reading posts, which means that students can either skip 2 posts and still receive 100 points for this part of their grade or alternatively submit the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> reading posts for extra credit.)

Sample reading posts can be found on Canvas.

## Papers

The papers will invite students to more deeply engage with the thinkers and ideas discussed in the course. The instructor will post the topic(s) at least two weeks before the due date and will provide details on how to complete them successfully at that point as well. The first paper will be due Friday, September 20; the second paper Friday, October 25; and the third paper Friday, November 22.

## Final Exam

The final exam will comprehensively cover the content of the course. It will take place on December 11 from 7:30 to 9:30 am. At the end of the semester, the instructor will provide more detailed information on the exact format and topics to review.

## **VIII. Grade Scale**

The following grade scale will be used to assign final letter grades for the course. See UF grading policies for assigning grade points at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/grades-grading-policies/>.

Grade Scale	Grade Value
93-100=A	A=4.0
90-92=A-	A-=3.67
87-89=B+	B+=3.33
83-86=B	B=3.00
80-82=B-	B-=2.67
77-79=C+	C+=2.33
73-76=C	C=2.00
70-72=C-	C-=1.67
67-69=D+	D+=1.33
63-66=D	D=1.00
60-62=D-	D-=0.67
0-59=E	E=0.00

## **IX. Accommodation for 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/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.

## **X. Academic Dishonesty**

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 Conduct Code (<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>) specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. If you have any questions or concerns, please consult with the instructor in this class.

## XI. Online 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.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

## XII. Schedule of Meetings and Topics

\* = Meetings before which a reading response is due.

R 8/22 Introduction/ Course Logistics

Week 1

T 8/27 Arguments/Reading Philosophical Texts

### CONSEQUENTIALISM

\*R 8/29 Classical Utilitarianism I  
Bentham, *The Principles of Morals and Legislation* (excerpt)  
Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 1 and 2

Week 2

T 9/3 Classical Utilitarianism II  
Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 2 (continued)

\*R 9/5 Classical Utilitarianism III  
How to Write a Philosophy Paper  
Mill, *Utilitarianism*, ch. 3 and 4

Week 3

\*T 9/10 Proto-Utilitarianism  
Mozi, *Mozi* (excerpt)

\*R 9/12 Application: Should We Help the Poor?  
Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"  
Hardin, "Life Boat Ethics"

Week 4

\*T 9/17 Application: Gross National Happiness  
TBD

\*R 9/19 Objections  
Taurek, "Should the Numbers Count?"  
Le Guin, "The Ones Who Walk Away"



## VIRTUE ETHICS

Week 9

- \*T 10/ 22      Aristotelian Virtue Ethics I      Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.1-5
- \*R 10/24      Aristotelian Virtue Ethics II      Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* I.7-13, II, and III.5-9

**F 10/25      SECOND PAPER DUE**

Week 10

- \*T 10/ 29      Aristotelian Virtue Ethics III      Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VI
- \*R 10/31      Aristotelian Virtue Ethics IV      Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* VII

Week 11

- \*T 11/5      Aristotelian Virtue Ethics V      Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* X.6-9
- \*R 11/7      Catch-up/review  
Confucian Virtue Ethics I      Kongzi, *Analects* (excerpt)

Week 12

- \*T 11/12      Confucian Virtue Ethics II      Mencius, *Mencius* (excerpt)
- \*R 11/14      Confucian Virtue Ethics III  
Contemporary Virtue Ethics I      Nussbaum, “Non-Relative Virtues: An Aristotelian Approach”

Week 13

- \*T 11/19      Contemporary Virtue Ethics II      Hursthouse, “Normative Virtue Ethics”
- \*R 11/21      Application: Business Ethics  
Catch-up/ Review      Hartmann, “The Virtue Ethics Approach to Business Ethics”

**F 11/22      THIRD PAPER DUE**

Thanksgiving Break



Week 14

T 12/3      Review

**T 12/11      FINAL EXAM 7:30-9:30 AM**