

PHI3650: Moral Philosophy

Fall 2025 | 3 credits

NOTE: This course complies with all UF academic policies. For information on those policies and for resources for students, please see UF's "[Academic Policies and Resources](#)" web page.

I. General Information

Meeting days and times: T (Periods 8-9); R (Period 9)

Class location: MAT 0115

Instructor(s):

Name: Professor Jaime Ahlberg

Office Building/Number: Griffin Floyd 332

Phone: 352-392-2084

Email: jahlberg@ufl.edu

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 10am-12pm

Course Description

In this course we will read some of the influential theories, classical texts, and contemporary reflections in the field of moral philosophy. Our exploration will primarily focus on the questions of normative ethics, such as: What fundamental principles, if any, should govern our ethical decisions? What constitutes a good life, or makes a human being good? What kinds of human relationships are worth having or striving for?

Catalog Description: Analysis and criticism of various normative ethical theories such as egoism, utilitarianism, Kantianism, deontology, and virtue ethics.

Prerequisites

Prereq: (Philosophy major) OR (Philosophy minor) OR ((PHI 2010 or PHI 2100 or PHI 2630 or PHM 2204 or PHI 1001 or PHI 1322 or PHI 1643 or IDS 1114) with a minimum grade of C or (Critical Tracking semester 3 or greater)).

General Education Designation: none.

Course Materials

1. Kant, *Grounding for the Metaphysic of Morals* (Hackett) (UF Bookstore and course reserves)
2. Mill, *On Liberty and Utilitarianism* (Bantam Classics) (UF Bookstore and course reserves)

3. Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. W.D. Ross (Oxford) (UF Bookstore and course reserves)
4. Recommended: Anthony Weston, *A Rulebook for Arguments*, 4th Edition (Hackett: 2009) (UF Bookstore)
5. Recommended: Strunk & White, *The Elements of Style*: <http://www.bartleby.com/141/> (Free Online)
6. Dostoyevsky, Fyodor *The Brothers Karamozov*, “The Grand Inquisitor”, pp. 297-319. (Canvas)
7. Kant, “On Lying”, *Metaphysics of Morals*, pp. 24-27 (Canvas)
8. Korsgaard, Christine, “The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 15, 4 (1986): pp. 325-349. (Canvas)
9. Rawls, John, “Justice as Fairness”, *The Philosophical Review*, 67, 2 (1958), 164-194. (Canvas)
10. Sartre, “The Wall” (pp. 1-15)
<https://www.sjsu.edu/people/cynthia.rostankowski/courses/HUM2BS14/s0/Sartre-The-Wall-reading.pdf> (and Canvas)
10. Williams, Bernard, “A Critique of Utilitarianism”, *Utilitarianism, For and Against*, pp. 67-103 (Canvas)

Materials will be available through the following means: University Bookstore and Library Course Reserves (Kant, Mill, Aristotle, Weston), and Canvas (other readings).

Materials Fee: N/A

II. Course Goals

Course Objectives

In this course we will:

- Explore influential theories, classical texts, and contemporary reflections in the field of moral philosophy.
- Practice disciplinary forms of communicating knowledge, ideas, and reasoning clearly and effectively in written and oral forms.

Student Learning Outcomes

A student who successfully completes this course will be able to:

- Identify and analyze the key elements, biases and influences that have shaped thinking in moral philosophy.

- Analyze information carefully and logically from multiple perspectives, using discipline specific methods, and develop reasoned solutions to problems.

III. Graded Work

Graded Components

Attendance (5%): Regular attendance will be essential to your success in the course, and it is required. Each student will be permitted 3 absences, beyond which legitimate and documented excuses for absences will be required. Examples of circumstances in which absences are excused include: legal obligations, death of a family member, university sponsored activities, and severe illness. Each unexcused absence will incur a penalty of a 1 letter grade deduction in one's attendance grade (e.g. an "A" will become a "B"). Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work are consistent with university policies.

Participation (10%): Under the assumption that long-term learning and personal development depend primarily on one's active engagement in the subject matter at hand, our class meetings will sometimes take the form of group discussions of the assigned readings and broader issues relating to them. In order to facilitate rich and reward class conversations, you should complete assignments promptly and thoughtfully and come to class prepared to share one or two coherent and articulate ideas, questions, or comments. If you need help speaking out, let me know and we can brainstorm ways for you to be more involved in class discussions. I reserve the right to call on students who haven't been participating and will occasionally calling on students at random to answer/comment to mix things up.

Participation will be assessed as follows:

Excellent (90-100): Thoughtful, insightful observation or question (on assigned reading) that demonstrates solid understanding of text in question and any relevant analytical tools used to interpret it.

Good (80-89): Sound, valid observation or question (on assigned reading) that demonstrates some understanding of text in question and any relevant analytical tools used to interpret it. Thoughtful, insightful observation or question on impromptu topic brought up in the course of lecture or discussion.

Needs Improvement (70-79): Student attempts to engage but contributions are uninformed and/or not thoughtful about the course material.

Unacceptable (0-69): Student absent from class or unengaged, and/or unable to offer questions or comments during class.

Unit Exams (85%): Three times in the semester there will be a unit exam. Each exam will be in class, and will test students' comprehension of the three influential moral theories we focus on in the course:

Thursday, October 2: Consequentialism Exam (25%)

Thursday, October 23: Deontology Exam (30%)

Tuesday, December 2: Virtue Ethics Exam (30%)

Students should expect to be tested on key concepts, important quotations, and applications of theory to case(s).

Extra Credit: Students will have to opportunity to earn up to **10%** (10 points) extra credit on their participation grade by attending an event outside of class, and submitting a 250-300 word reflection assignment on how the event is related to course themes. Throughout the term, the course instructor will announce events that may be attended for the purposes of extra credit. Students may attend a different event for extra credit, but only with instructor approval.

Course Grading Scale

Letter Grade	Number Grade
A	100-93.5
A-	93.4-89.5
B+	89.4-86.5
B	86.4-82.5
B-	82.4-79.5
C+	79.4-76.5
C	76.4-72.5
C-	72.4-69.5
D+	69.4-66.5
D	66.4-62.5
D-	62.4-59.5
E	59.4-0

Note: A minimum grade of C is required to earn credit to meet Philosophy Major requirements.

IV. Reading & Assignment Calendar

Date	Topic	Readings/Preparation	Work Due
8/21	Introductions		
8/26, 8/28	Classical Utilitarianism	In-class exercise: "The Construction of Moral Principles"	
9/2, 9/4		Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 2 (pp.120-139) Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> , Ch. 4 (pp.148-154)	
9/9, 9/11		Mill, continued If time: <i>Brothers Karamazov</i> excerpt (pp. 297-319)	

9/16, 9/18		Bernard Williams, "A Critique of Utilitarianism" (pp.93-118) Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> Ch.1 (pp.5-19) Mill <i>On Liberty</i> , Ch. 2 (pp.20-28, 40-61) Mill <i>On Liberty</i> , Ch. 5 p.1	
9/23, 9/25		Mill, continued Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Ch. 3 (pp.62-82) Mill <i>On Liberty</i> , Ch. 4 (pp.83-103)	
9/30, 10/2		Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> , Ch. 5 (pp.104-128) Unit Exam 10/2	Consequentialism Exam in Class 10/2
10/7, 10/9	Deontology	Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> Preface and Ch. 1 (pp. 1-17) Kant, <i>Groundwork</i> Ch. 2 (pp. 19-32)	
10/14, 10/16		Kant, Ch. 2 (pp. 32-48) Kant, "On a Supposed Right to Lie Because of Philanthropic Concerns" (pp.63-67) Sartre, "The Wall" (pp. 1-15)	
10/21, 10/23		Kant, excerpt from the <i>Lectures on Ethics</i> , "On Lying" (pp. 24-27) Unit Exam	Deontology Exam in Class 10/23
10/28, 10/30		Christine Korsgaard, "The Right to Lie: Kant on Dealing with Evil" (pp. 325-349)	
11/4, 11/6		John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness" (pp.164-194) The Rawls Game	
11/13	Virtue Ethics	Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> , Books I (pp.3-22), II (pp.23-37), and X Chs. 6-9 (pp.192-203) Holiday 11/11	

11/18, 11/20		Aristotle, <i>Nicomachean Ethics</i> Book III Chs. 6-12 (pp.49-59), Book IV (pp.60-79)	
11/25, 11/27		Thanksgiving Holiday	
12/2		Unit Exam 12/2	Virtue Ethics Exam in Class 12/2

V. Academic Policies & Resources:

<https://syllabus.ufl.edu/syllabus-policy/uf-syllabus-policy-links/>

VI. Procedure for Conflict Resolution

Any classroom issues, disagreements or grade disputes should be discussed first between the instructor and the student. If the problem cannot be resolved, please contact Professor Jon Rick, Undergrad Coordinator (jrick@ufl.edu, (352) 392-2084). Be prepared to provide documentation of the problem, as well as all graded materials for the semester. Issues that cannot be resolved

departmentally will be referred to the University Ombuds Office (<http://www.ombuds.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1308) or the Dean of Students Office (<http://www.dso.ufl.edu>; 352-392-1261).