

PHILO 130: Introduction to Moral Philosophy

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Office Hours: T/Th 3:50-5:15 & By appointment.

Course Description: Are you meeting morality's demands? To answer this question, you need to know what morality demands of you. Well, it's hard to deny that morality demands us to do good. But how much good? Is it moral to spend your money on beer in Aggieville rather than use it to alleviate people's suffering in Third World countries? After all, you would do much more good by donating that money. So, maybe you're failing to meet morality's demands. Or maybe morality doesn't require us to do good?

A lot of moral philosophy works like this. We have some belief about morality (e.g., morality requires us to do good). When we reflect on this belief, we discover that it conflicts with something else we believe about morality (e.g., it's morally okay to spend money on beer in Aggieville). Then, we're faced with a puzzle. It seems like both beliefs can't be true. So, which do we give up? You *could* brush these puzzles off: "Who cares?! I'm going to drink my beer! Go cats!" But most of us *do* care about being moral. Our values, including our beliefs about morality, make us who we are. I want my values to fit together, rather than conflict. I suspect you do too.

In this course, we will discuss several moral puzzles (including this one about doing good). The hope is that, by the end, you will have learned something about your values, how to make them fit together a little better, and something about how to live a more moral life.

Some questions we will address:

1. What's the relationship between morality and culture? What about morality and religion?
2. How should we reason about morality?
3. Is morality about doing good or respecting persons? Or both? Or neither?
4. What moral obligations do we have to animals, to the poor, and to the oppressed?
5. What is the relationship between (bad) luck and justice?
6. Is our society living up to the requirements of economic, educational, and racial justice?
7. What is racism?

Learning Objectives: In this course, you will:

- Develop a disposition for finding the philosophical in the familiar.
- Develop some basic philosophical skills (e.g., argument analysis).
- Develop skills necessary to read, understand, and engage critically with difficult texts.
- Develop the skill of discussing philosophy.
- Develop important intellectual virtues (e.g., humility and honesty).
- Learn what philosophers have said about philosophical problems
- Think critically about these problems.
- Come to appreciate the interdisciplinary nature of philosophy.

Texts: All readings will be available on Canvas. You should bring hard copies to class.

Course Requirements

Attendance	Required
Participation	10%
Philosophy-in-Life Posts	15%
Reading Quizzes	10%
Exams	55%
Student Presentations	10%

Attendance

Attendance is required. This is because you won't do well in this course if you don't attend. You are allowed three free absences. After three free absences, each unexcused absence will deduct .5% from your grade.

Grumpy-Dad Comment: No need to ask, I'll tell you now: if you missed class, you missed something important. What did you miss? To find out, come to office hours or ask:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Participation (10%)

I think of a college class like a team. I'm the coach or the captain, but we're all members of the team trying to achieve the same goal: critical engagement with the course material. As with other teams, we must all do our part; if any of us regularly fails to do their part, the whole team will suffer. You expect me to come to class every day prepared to teach; likewise, I expect you to come to class every day prepared to learn. As members of this class, we owe each other the fulfillment of these expectations. Sometimes you will need motivation and I will do my best to provide it. If I am failing to meet your expectations, please tell me (respectfully). If you are not willing to do your part, you should not take this course.

Participation Grade Scale

High (9-10%): You participate nearly every class.

Moderately High (7-9%): You participate most classes.

Moderate (4-6%): You participate somewhat frequently.

Moderately Low (2-3%): You rarely participate. You're distracted or distracting.

Low (0-1): You have participated at most only a couple times. You're distracted or distracting.

Some Ways to Participate

1. Ask questions about the readings or lectures.
2. Answer questions when asked.
3. Contribute your perspective to a discussion.
4. Raise objections to arguments.
5. Mention a relevant life experience at an appropriate time.
6. Discuss course material with me after class or during office hours.

*Note 1: Participation isn't just about talking, it's about making a meaningful contribution.

*Note 2: Your level of participation is independent of whether you pay attention in class. In many cases of Moderate or lower levels of participation, it's very clear to me that you regularly pay attention in class. But to receive full credit, you need to do more than pay attention.

Philosophy in Life Posts (15%)

Philosophy is everywhere. These assignments are meant to help you notice it. You will complete three “philosophy in life” posts in the discussion forums on Canvas. See the *Guidelines for Philosophy in Life Posts* in the Introductory Material Folder on Canvas for an explanation of how to complete these assignments. In outline, I want you to write about how what you’ve learned or thought about in this course connects up with some aspect of your life, and you will need to read and comment on some of your peers’ posts, as well.

Reading Quizzes (10%) *6 quiz-pairs, 8 points each, final score based on top 5 quiz-pair scores*

To do well in this course, you will need to read the assigned articles carefully. I will outline the important points in class, but to understand what’s going on you’ll need to understand the articles. To help you keep up with the readings, there will be six reading “quiz-pairs.” Your lowest quiz-pair score will be dropped. Each quiz-pair is worth 2% of your grade.

You will be expected to read each article twice. As you read it, come to class, and read it again, you will develop a deeper understanding of the article. During the second reading, you will be able to draw on the discussion we have in class on the previous day. You will have to take each quiz twice: the day we discuss the reading in class and the next day of class. (Hence, “quiz-pair.”) There will be four questions on each quiz. You will get one point for each question you answer correctly each time the quiz is given. My goal in using quizzes this way is to help you get the most out of the readings: You can use the quiz you take on one day to help guide you as you re-read the material in preparation for the next class. And since you already know the questions that will be on the second quiz – they will be the **same questions** that were on the first quiz – you can read carefully the second time around to ensure that you get a perfect score.

A Note on Reading Philosophy

Reading philosophy is difficult. Unlike many texts you’ll read in college, most philosophical texts are not written for students. Even for professional philosophers, philosophical texts can be difficult. Comprehending difficult texts is a skill. It’s not one I expect you to have already, but it is one I want you to develop during this course. Over the semester, if you put in the effort, you will find that it will be easier to understand the readings. And if you can understand philosophical texts, you can understand just about anything. The Reading Quizzes will help you develop this skill because they will force you to think about the reading material.

For tips on reading philosophy, see these links:

- <http://www.jimpryor.net/teaching/guidelines/reading.html>
- <https://www4.uwsp.edu/philosophy/dwarren/IntroBook/GettingStarted%5CReadingWritingPhilosophy%5Creading%20philosophy.htm>

Exams (55%)

You will take three exams in this course. The exams are cumulative. (Exam 1 = 10% Exam 2 = 20% Exam 3 = 25%.) Most students have never taken a philosophy class before. This can translate into anxiety about the nature of a philosophy exam. The exams will not be based on your opinions, rather they test your understanding of the philosophers, positions, and readings we discuss in class. They will be mixtures of true/false questions, short answer questions, and longer essay questions. They are meant to provide you with more incentive to reflect on the material, to assess your grasp of the readings and in-class discussions, and to allow you to demonstrate what you’ve learned. Later exams are worth more than earlier because (1) they are cumulative and (2) I want to reward you for improving your understanding of earlier course content throughout the semester.

How should you prepare for the exams? The *best* thing you can do is to spend 5-10 minutes every day looking over your notes from class and trying to explain the material to someone. (Who? Your roommate, your parents, your friends, a bar tender, me...anyone who will listen!) Regularly thinking about the course material is an exponentially better way of preparing for the exams than cramming a few days before. And trying to explain the material will help you connect things in your mind and help you realize what you *don't* understand, yet. If you follow this method, you will almost certainly earn high marks on the exams.

Student Presentations (10%)

At the end of the semester, there will be 10 group presentations. Each presentation will be about 15 minutes long. Your group will read a paper on some moral issue and then teach that paper to the class. You will have multiple opportunities to work on the presentations in class and to meet with me to discuss your plans for the presentations. More details can be found in the Presentation Assignment folder on Canvas.

Communication

Office Hours: I will have regular office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays throughout the semester. This means I will be available in my office to discuss course material (or other issues). If my scheduled office hours aren't convenient, feel free to schedule a different time to meet.

You can benefit from discussing course material outside of class. True story: During the first half of last semester, one of my students – call him Al – never came to office hours. He earned one of the lowest grades on the midterm. Then he started coming to office hours regularly. Right before the final, Al said to me, “I wish I had come to office hours all semester.” He ended up getting an A on the final. Don't be like Al! Don't wait! The course material is difficult to grasp. Don't expect to understand everything right away. Don't be shy about talking to me about something you don't understand. And don't overestimate how well you understand the material!

Contact Policy: Aside from my office hours, I'm most easily reached at the email address above. I check my email frequently and will respond promptly within 24 hours to most inquiries. **If you have a question about the course mechanics or schedule, please check the syllabus before emailing me.** Please note: while I will most likely read your email within a couple of hours of its being sent, I may not reply immediately. If you do not receive a reply within 24 hours, please talk to me in class or send another email as a reminder.

Electronic Devices

(**Grumpy-Dad Comments** throughout.) Laptops are permitted in class, but must be used solely for class purposes. Not for Facebook, not for catching Pokemon, not for playing poker, not for commenting on animal pictures. You may use them to take notes and look at the readings; that's it! I will prohibit laptop use if laptops are not being used for class purposes. Phones should not be used during class. Texting and/or checking social media with the phone in your lap under the desktop counts as using your phone.

Conduct

All student activities in the University, including this course, are governed by the [Student Judicial Conduct Code](#) as outlined in the Student Governing Association [By Laws](#), Article V, Section 3, number 2. Students who engage in behavior that disrupts the learning environment may be asked to leave the class.

Cheating and Plagiarism

If you are caught cheating or plagiarizing in this course, you will receive an XF as your final grade for the course. You'll also be required to take the K-State Development and Integrity

Course. Completing this course will remove the X from your record, but not the F. Here is the university's official statement on Academic Honesty:

Kansas State University has an Honor and Integrity System based on personal integrity, which is presumed to be sufficient assurance that, in academic matters, one's work is performed honestly and without unauthorized assistance. Undergraduate and graduate students, by registration, acknowledge the jurisdiction of the Honor and Integrity System. The policies and procedures of the Honor and Integrity System apply to all full and part-time students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate courses on-campus, off-campus, and via distance learning. The Honor and Integrity System website can be reached via the following URL: www.k-state.edu/honor. A component vital to the Honor and Integrity System is the inclusion of the Honor Pledge which applies to all assignments, examinations, or other course work undertaken by students. The Honor Pledge is implied, whether or not it is stated: "On my honor, as a student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this academic work." A grade of XF can result from a breach of academic honesty. The F indicates failure in the course; the X indicates the reason is an Honor Pledge violation.

Feel free to ask before completing assignments whether some behavior counts as cheating or plagiarism.

Disabilities

I will do my best to help students with disabilities or learning challenges succeed in this course. Students with disabilities who need classroom accommodations, access to technology, or information about emergency building/campus evacuation processes should contact the Student Access Center and/or their instructor. Services are available to students with a wide range of disabilities including, but not limited to, physical disabilities, medical conditions, learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, depression, and anxiety. If you are a student enrolled in campus/online courses through the Manhattan or Olathe campuses, contact the Student Access Center at accesscenter@k-state.edu, 785-532-6441; for K-State Polytechnic campus, contact Academic and Student Services at polytechnicadvising@ksu.edu or call 785-826-2974.

Tentative Schedule

	Tuesday	Thursday
Week 1 Introduction	1/17: No reading	1/19: Russell "The Value of Philosophy"; Logic Lecture
Week 2 Morality & Culture	1/24: Pojman "Who's to Judge?" RQ1a	1/26: Pojman (cont'd) RQ1b
Week 3 Morality & Religion	1/31: Shafer-Landau "Morality and Religion" RQ2a	2/2: Berg "Abortion and Miscarriage" RQ2b
Week 4 Doing Good	2/7: Singer "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" RQ3a	2/9: Singer (cont'd) RQ3b
Week 5 Separateness of Persons Problem	2/14: Le Guin "The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas"	2/16: Catch-up/Review Philosophy in Life Post 1 Due
Week 6 Kantian Ethics	2/21: Exam 1	2/23: Chapman "Kantian Ethics in 1000 Words" RQ4a

Week 7 Kantian Ethics & Self-Respect	2/28: Hay “A Feminist Kant” Recommended: Hay “The Obligation to Resist Oppression” RQ4b	3/2: CLASS CANCELLED
Week 8 Animal Ethics & the Moral Community	3/7: Norcross “Puppies, Pigs, and People” Kant “We Have No Duties to Animals” RQ5a	3/9: No new reading. RQ5b Philosophy in Life Post 2 Due
Week 9	3/14: Catch-up/Review	3/16: Exam 2
Week 10	3/21: SPRING BREAK!!	3/23: SPRING BREAK!!
Week 11 Economic Justice	3/28: No Reading: Justice Game	3/30: No Reading: Justice Game
Week 12 Economic Justice	4/4: No Reading: Justice Game	4/6: Reading: TBD
Week 13 Race and Educational Justice	4/11: No reading: Listen to <i>This American Life: The Problem We All Live With</i> in class.	4/13: Continue listening to <i>This American Life: The Problem We All Live With</i> in class. Anderson “Why Racial Integration Remains an Imperative”; Willingham “Why Does Family Wealth Affect Student Outcomes?” RQ6a
Week 14 Race and Educational Justice	4/18: No new reading RQ6b	4/20: Anderson “Segregation, Racial Stigma, and Discrimination” Philosophy in Life Post 3 Due
Week 15	4/25: Student Presentations	4/27: Student Presentations
Week 16	5/2: Student Presentations	5/4: Student Presentations/Review
Week 17 Finals Week		

Assignment Schedule

Reading Quizzes

RQ1a 1/24 **RQ1b** 1/26 **RQ2a** 1/31 **RQ2b** 2/2 **RQ3a** 2/7 **RQ3b** 2/9
RQ4a 2/23 **RQ4b** 2/28 **RQ5a** 3/7 **RQ5b** 3/9 **RQ6a** 4/13 **RQ6b** 4/18

Philosophy in Life Posts

PLP1 2/16 **PLP2** 3/9 **PLP3** 4/20

Exams

Exam 1 2/21 **Exam 2** 3/16 **Exam 3** Finals Week