

Course Syllabus
Morality and Justice
PHIL 116, Fall, 2018

Instructor: Dr. Matt Zwolinski

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday, 2:30 – 4:30; Friday: 2:30 – 3:30

Office: F167A

Course Website: <http://ole.sandiego.edu> [Blackboard]

Phone: 619-260-4094

Email: mzwolinski@sandiego.edu

Required Books:

Matt Zwolinski, *Arguing About Political Philosophy*, 2nd edition (Routledge)

James Rachels and Stuart Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 9th edition (McGraw Hill)

Other readings on Electronic Reserve at Copley Library

Core Requirements: This course fulfills the Core Curriculum requirement for Ethics.

Content:

Is it wrong to eat meat? Does the government have the right to ban the personal ownership of firearms? Does it have the right to ban prostitution?

Most people have opinions – sometimes very strong opinions! – about questions like these. But most people have never thought deeply about the moral framework that underlies those opinions. What exactly is it that makes some actions right and others wrong, anyways? Do right and wrong depend on your religion? Are they merely subjective constructs?

This course will help you think through these questions in a reasoned, systematic way by introducing you to the philosophical study of ethics and politics. We will begin by exploring the ethical theories developed by Aristotle, Mill, and Kant, which attempt provide a unified and coherent understanding of morality. We will then examine a number of concrete moral controversies in light of these theories – including debates over immigration, global poverty, and gun control. Finally, we will examine the political theories of Hobbes and Locke, which raise fundamental questions about the moral justification of the state.

Throughout this course, our focus will be on *reasoning* and *argumentation*, not conclusions. The goal of this course is not to get you to have the “right” opinions about immigration, gun control, or any of the other issues we talk about. It is to help you to think through those issues *on your own* in a more rational and better-informed way. That means taking arguments from the “other side” seriously, and entering into conversation with your fellow students in a true spirit of openness. In philosophy, our goal is not to *win* arguments. It is to seek the truth. And truth can come from surprising places!

Course Requirements:

Philosophical readings are dense and difficult. It will probably take longer than you expect to read them once, and it will probably be necessary to re-read most pieces at least once to come to an adequate understanding of the material. You should expect to spend at least **six hours per week outside of class** time reading and re-reading the material.

- **Daily Reflections** – By **9:00 am** before each class session for which there is a new reading assignment, you must post to Blackboard approximately **200 words** responding to the readings assigned for that day. You are not expected to write something that shows mastery of the reading. Rather, your purpose is to demonstrate thoughtful engagement with the readings. You must also **ask a question** about the readings. You should come to class prepared to be accountable for what you have written and to answer questions about it. All students are responsible for these posting regardless of whether they attend class that day.

Forum postings will be graded 5 (excellent), 4 (solid), 3 (poor), or 0 (could have been written without doing the reading at all). One way to ensure achieving a 5 for any particular forum is (in addition to making an original post) to compose a thoughtful and respectful reply to another student's posting.

- **Friday Debates** – During the middle part of the semester, we will have five in-class debates on different topics of moral controversy. Eight students (four on each side) will participate in each debate, and the rest of the class will evaluate their performance. You must sign up in advance for one of these debates – **first come gets first choice**. Your goal in these debates is not to score rhetorical points or “cheap shots,” but to argue the merits of your position as clearly and as logically as possible. I will distribute a handout and rubric in advance of these debates with more specific guidance.

- **Exams:** You will have three in-class exams – two during the regular semester and one final exam. Each exam will consist of multiple-choice questions, short-answer questions, and possibly a longer essay. The final exam will be cumulative, but will emphasize material covered in the last half of the course. **Both exams must be taken at the date and time at which they are scheduled on this syllabus.** No exceptions will be made except for cases of documented medical emergencies. Please **look at the dates now** and check for conflicts.

- **Participation** – Philosophy is best learned through active conversation with others. It is therefore important that you be a regular participant in classroom discussions. Accordingly, I will take attendance and **you will lose all of that day's participation points if you are absent**. In addition, **showing up late to class three times will equal one absence**.

Adequate participation does not necessarily require that you have an extroverted personality that naturally enjoys speaking in class. I will regularly create opportunities for everyone to participate in class. This will include calling on people to elaborate a point, respond to someone else's argument, or simply answer a fact-based question.

There are also a number of ways to lose participation points. These include but are not limited to:

- Sleeping in class
- Texting, emailing, Facebooking, or otherwise using technology for non-academic purposes in class
- Participating in class in a manner disrespectful to your professor or to your fellow students
- **Failure to bring a copy of the assigned readings to class**

Your Grade

Each activity in this class is worth a certain number of points. Your grade will be determined based on a straight (un-curved) analysis of percentage of points earned vs. total points.

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Daily Reflections: | 10% |
| Friday Debates | 10% |
| Exam 1: | 20% |
| Exam 2: | 20% |
| Final Exam: | 30% |
| Participation: | 10% |

| | |
|----|---------------|
| A+ | 97 - 100% |
| A | 93 - 96.9 |
| A- | 90 - 92.9 |
| B+ | 87 - 89.9 |
| B | 83 - 86.9 |
| B- | 80 - 82.9 |
| C+ | 77 - 79.9 |
| C | 73 - 76.9 |
| C- | 70 - 72.9 |
| D+ | 67 - 67.9 |
| D | 63 - 66.9 |
| D- | 60 - 62.9 |
| F | 59.9 or below |

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course...

- Students should be able to describe the main tenets of the major ethical theories (e.g. Utilitarianism, Kantianism) in essay form.
- Students should be able to analyze specific moral controversies such as immigration and gun control, drawing on the moral theories they have learned.
- Students should be able to explain the similarities and differences between Hobbes' and Locke's social contract theory of the state, and assess the anarchist challenge to those theories.

Academic Integrity

You are expected to know and follow University Policies on cheating and plagiarism. See the Code of Academic Integrity. Outside research is *a good thing* in philosophy. Just cite it! If it is determined that you have cheated, you will fail the course and I may recommend that you be expelled from the University.

Schedule for PHIL 116: Morality and Justice
Fall, 2018
Professor Zwolinski

KEY DATES AT A GLANCE

| | | |
|-----------|---|---|
| Sept 21 | - | No class: Instructor Away |
| Oct 5 | - | First Exam |
| Oct 16 | - | Gun control debate – 4:00 – 6:00 PM at the IPJ Theater. Extra credit! |
| Oct 19 | - | No class: Fall Holiday |
| Nov 19 | - | Second Exam |
| Nov 21-23 | - | No class: Thanksgiving |
| Dec 21 | - | Final Exam at 11:00 AM (Section 2), or 2:00 PM (Section 4) |

Schedule of Readings

Note:

[ER] = Electronic Reserves

[AAPP] = *Arguing About Political Philosophy*

[EMP] = *Elements of Moral Philosophy*

Week 1 (Sept 5 - 7) – Introduction: why care about morality?

Sept 5:

- Introduction to course

Sept 7:

- Plato, “The Ring of Gyges” [ER]

Week 2 (Sept 10 - 14) – Three challenges to philosophical ethics: egoism, relativism, divine command

Sept 10:

- James and Stuart Rachels, “Ethical Egoism” [EMP, pp. 66-83]

Sept 12:

- James and Stuart Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” [EMP, pp. 14-32]

Sept 14:

- James and Stuart Rachels, “Does Morality Depend on Religion?” [EMP, pp. 50-6]

Week 3 (Sept 17 - 21) – Ethical theory part 1: Virtue Ethics

Sept 17:

- Aristotle, “The Virtues” [ER]
- James and Stuart Rachels, “Virtue Ethics” [EMP, pp. 169-185]

Sept 19:

- Aristotle and Rachels, continued

Sept 21:

- ***No class – instructor away***

Week 4 (Sept 24 - 28) – Ethical theory part 2: Utilitarianism

Sept 24:

- Jeremy Bentham, “The Principle of Utility” [ER]
- James and Stuart Rachels, “The Utilitarian Approach” [EMP, pp. 101-117]

Sept 26:

- James and Stuart Rachels, “The Debate Over Utilitarianism” [EMP, pp. 118-132]

Sept 28:

- Mill and Rachels, continued

Week 5 (Oct 1 - 5) – Ethical theory part 3: Deontology; Exam 1

Oct 1:

- Immanuel Kant, “The Categorical Imperative” [ER]
- James and Stuart Rachels, “Are There Absolute Moral Rules?” [EMP, pp. 133-144]

Oct 3:

- James and Stuart Rachels, “Kant and Respect for Persons” [EMP, pp. 145-155]

Oct 5:

- **Exam 1**

Week 6 (Oct 8 - 12) –Is there a right to own a gun?

Oct 8:

- Michael Huemer, “Is There a Right to Own a Gun?” [ER]

Oct 10:

- Michael Shermer, “How Data Can Help Clarify the Gun-Control Debate” [ER]
- Michael Shermer, “The Colorado Massacre, Gun Control, and the Law of Large Numbers” [ER]
- Jeff McMahan, “Why Gun ‘Control’ is Not Enough” [ER]

Oct 12:

- **Friday Debate #1!**

Week 7 (Oct 15 - 19) – What do we owe the world’s poor?

Oct 15:

- Peter Singer, “The Life You Can Save” [AAPP, pp. 667-682]

Oct 17:

- David Schmidtz, “Islands in a Sea of Obligation” [ER]

Oct 19:

- *No class – Fall Holiday*

Week 8 (Oct 22 - 26) – Is immigration a human right?

Oct 22:

- Michael Huemer, “Is There a Right to Immigrate?” [AAPP, pp. 625-649]

Oct 24:

- Stephen Macedo, “The Moral Dilemma of U.S. Immigration Policy” [ER]

Oct 26:

- **Friday Debate #2!**

Week 9 (Oct 29 – Nov 2) – Is it wrong to eat meat?

Oct 29:

- Peter Singer, “All Animals Are Equal” [ER]

Oct 31:

- Tibor Machan, “Do Animals Have Rights?” [ER]

Nov 2:

- **Friday Debate #3!**

Week 10 (Nov 5 - 9) – Is physician-assisted suicide wrong?

Nov 5:

- James Rachels, “Active and Passive Euthanasia” [ER]

Nov 7:

- Phillipa Foot, “Killing and Letting Die” [ER]

Nov 9:

- **Friday Debate #4!**

Week 11 (Nov 12 - 16) – Should prostitution be illegal?

Nov 12:

- Ole Martin Moen, “Is Prostitution Harmful?” [ER]

Nov 14:

- Peter de Marneffe, “A Paternalistic Case for Prostitution Laws” [ER]

Nov 16

- **Friday Debate #5!**

Week 12 (Nov 19 - 23) – Exam 2

Nov 19:

- **Exam 2**

Nov 21 - 23

- ***No class – Thanksgiving Break***

Week 13 (Nov 26 - 30) – The State of Nature and the purpose of government

Nov 26:

- Hobbes, “The State of Nature as a State of War” [AAPP, pp. 7-22]

Nov 28:

- Hobbes, continued

Nov 30:

- Hobbes, continued

Week 14 (Dec 3 - 7) – Natural rights and the limits of government

Dec 3:

- Locke, “The State of Nature and the Law of Nature” [AAPP, pp. 41-50]

Dec 5:

- Locke, continued

Dec 7:

- Locke, continued

Week 15 (Dec 10 - 14) – The extreme limits of government: philosophical anarchism

Dec 10:

- M.B.E. Smith, “Is There a *Prima Facie* Duty to Obey the Law?” [AAPP, pp. 138-152]

Dec 12:

- Murray Rothbard, “Society Without a State” [AAPP, pp. 59-69]

Dec 14:

- Smith and Rothbard, continued

Final Exam:

- Section 2 (MWF 11:15 - 12:10) – Friday, December 21st, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM
- Section 4 (MWF 1:25 – 2:20) – Friday, December 21st, 2:00 – 4:00 PM