

Philosophy I07: Introduction to Ethics

Wed 9:50–11:10, Fri 2:50-4:10

Campbell Hall-A5

Contact information

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Office hour: Weds 12:00-1:00, Fri 1:00-2:00 or by appointment, room 546

Course description and learning goals

Phil I07 section 4 is an introductory survey of ethical theory, the philosophical examination of good and bad, right and wrong, and how we ought to live. The course is structured around three guiding questions. What is the good life? What is the right thing to do? What is the status of ethics? These questions correspond to three of the main branches of ethics in the Western tradition, namely value theory, normative ethics, and metaethics respectively. Drawing from both historical and contemporary sources, we will discuss hedonism, objective-list theories, desire theories, divine command theory, natural law theory, ethical egoism, consequentialism, Kantianism, pluralism, social contract theory, virtue ethics, feminist ethics, relativism, naturalism, emotivism, the error theory, non-naturalism, and more.

Learning Goals

Become familiar with the main philosophical questions, concepts, arguments, and theories that arise in value theory, normative ethics, and metaethics.

Develop fundamental philosophical and critical thinking skills. These include the ability to (i) construct, reconstruct, and evaluate arguments in one's own words, (ii) understand complex concepts, arguments, theories, and problems, (iii) interpret historical and contemporary scholarly work in ethics, and (iv) write clearly and concisely.

Required texts

Textbook to purchase: Russ Shafer-Landau *The Fundamentals of Ethics*. **4th edition (2017)** ISBN: 9780190631390

Additional readings: Freely available for download on the Sakai page

Assignments and grading policy

Attendance and participation	10%
Quizzes	30%
Midterm paper	25%
Final paper	35%

Your **attendance** and **participation** to the class will be worth **10% of your final grade**. You have **2 free unexcused absences**. After that, you will lose **0.5%** of your final mark per absence. If you have to miss a class, please use the University absence reporting website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/> to indicate the date and reason for your absence.

I will assign a total of **12 online quizzes**. Together, they will be worth 30% of your final grade. Your **two lowest quiz scores won't count**. Only your best ten will count. The quizzes will evaluate your grasp of the readings and lectures. You may use your notes and the readings to

complete them, but you must do so alone. The quizzes will be made available online, on the Sakai course page, the day before the quizzes due dates (see schedule below for quiz deadlines). They must be completed online before the beginning of the class on quiz deadline days. **Late quizzes will receive a zero.**

You will write **two papers**. A shorter, **midterm paper worth 25%** of your total grade and a longer **final paper worth 30%** of your final grade. In your papers, you will explore in detail a topic of each half of the course that particularly interested you. You will be expected to defend a particular thesis in your own words, with your own arguments. A list of possible topics will be made available on Sakai. You can choose a topic that is not on the list, but I must approve it first. The midterm must be **1500-2000 words** long and will be due by October 30th, 11:55pm. The final paper must be **2500-3500 words** long and will be due via email by December 18th, 11:55pm. You will submit the papers via Sakai.

Late assignments will receive lower marks. You will lose **5%** of your assignment mark for each day late.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE (subject to change, see the Sakai page for latest schedule)

Sept 6 – Introduction

- Shafer-Landau, FOE, “Introduction”

PART I – Value theory: what is the good life?

Sept 8 – Hedonism

- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch.1
- John Stuart Mill *Utilitarianism* (selections)

Sept 13 – Problems for hedonism

- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch.2
- Robert Nozick *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (selections)

Sept 15 – Desire theories

- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch.3 & Ch.4

Sept 20 – Objective list theories

- **Quiz #1 due**
- Derek Parfit – *Reasons and Persons* (selections)
- Guy Fletcher – “Objective list theories”

PART II – Normative ethics: what is the right thing to do?

Sept 22 – Morality and religion

- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch.5
- Plato – *Euthyphro* (selections)

Sept 27 – Natural law

- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch.6
- **Quiz #2 due**

Sept 29 – Egoism

- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch.7 & Ch.8
- Plato – *Republic* (selections)

Oct 4 – Consequentialism I

- **Quiz #3 due**
- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch.9
- John Stuart Mill – *Utilitarianism* (selections)

Oct 6 – Consequentialism II

- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch.10
- JJC Smart – “Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism”
- Brad Hooker – “Rule-consequentialism”

Oct 11 – Kantianism I

- **Quiz #4 due**
- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch.11
- Immanuel Kant – *The Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (selections)

Oct 13 – Kantianism II

- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch.12
- Thomas E. Hill – “Kantian normative ethics”

Oct 18 – Social contract theory I

- **Quiz #5 due**
- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch. 13
- Thomas Hobbes – *Leviathan* (selections)

Oct 20 – Social contract theory II

- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch. 14
- T.M. Scanlon – “Contractualism and utilitarianism”

Oct 25 – Pluralism I

- **Quiz #6 due**
- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch.15
- Judith Jarvis Thomson – “Killing, letting die, and the trolley problem”
- (Optional) Philippa Foot – “Abortion and the doctrine of double effect”

Oct 27 – Pluralism II

- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch.16
- W.D. Ross – *The Right and the Good* (selections)

Oct 30, 11:55pm – MIDTERM PAPER DUE

Nov 1 – Virtue ethics

- **No quiz**
- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch. 17
- Aristotle – *Nicomachean Ethics* (selections)

Nov 3 – Feminist ethics

- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch. 18
- Hilde Lindemann – *An Invitation to Feminist Ethics*, Ch.1

PART III – Metaethics: what is the status of ethics?

Nov 8 – What is metaethics?

- **Quiz #7 due**
- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch. 21

Nov 10 – Relativism: ethics is relative

- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch. 19
- Harry Gensler – “Cultural Relativism”

Nov 15 – Mackie’s “queerness” argument: ethics is metaphysically strange

- **Quiz #8 due**
- J.L. Mackie – *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (selections)
- Richard Joyce – *The Myth of Morality* (selections)

Nov 17 – Harman’s explanatory challenge: ethics is explanatorily superfluous

- Gilbert Harman – “Ethics and observation”
- Nicholas Sturgeon – “Moral explanations”

Nov 22 – Genealogical arguments: moral judgments are the result of evolution

- **Quiz #9 due**
- Sharon Street – “Does anything really matter or did we just evolve to think so?”

Nov 24 – NO CLASS (THANKSGIVING)

Nov 29 – Moore’s ‘open question’ argument: ethics cannot be analyzed or reduced

- **Quiz #10 due**
- G.E. Moore – *Principia Ethica* (selections)

Dec 1 – Error theory: ethics is a system of mistaken beliefs

- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch.20, 308-314
- J.L. Mackie – *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, Ch.1

Dec 6 – Emotivism: ethics is the nonfactual expression of attitudes

- **Quiz #11 due**
- Shafer-Landau, FOE, Ch.20, 312-321
- A. J. Ayer – *Language, Truth and Logic* (selections)

Dec 8 – Nonnaturalism: ethics is nonnatural

- Jonathan Dancy – “Nonnaturalism”
- Shafer-Landau – “Ethics as Philosophy”

Dec 13 (last class) – Catch-up & Revision

- **Quiz #12 due**

Dec 18, 11:55pm – FINAL PAPER DUE

Academic integrity policy

Don't plagiarize! The current academic integrity policy can be found at: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/> For a useful guide on how to avoid plagiarism, go to: http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/avoid_plagiarism

Student disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations must follow the procedures outlined at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/applying-for-services>

Student-wellness services

Just In Case Web App <http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS) (848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / rhscaps.rutgers.edu/

CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA) (848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / vpva.rutgers.edu/

The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

Disability Services (848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

The Office of Disability Services works with students with a documented disability to determine the eligibility of reasonable accommodations, facilitates and coordinates those accommodations when applicable, and lastly engages with the Rutgers community at large to provide and connect students to appropriate resources.

Scarlet Listeners (732) 247-5555 / <http://www.scarletlisteners.com/>

Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.