

Ethical Theory

PHI 4661

3 credits

Prerequisites

There are no formal prerequisites for this course. However, students should make an effort to become familiar with basic philosophical terminology and acquire some understanding of the history of philosophy.

Course Logistics

Term: Fall 2016

Time: TR: 11:00-12:20 p.m.

Classroom: GS 107

Instructor Contact Information

Professor: Dr. Clevis Headley

Office: SO 277

Office Hours: Office Hours: MW: 01-2:00pm, TR: 10-11am, and 1-2pm or by appointment Phone: 561-297-2928

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Course Description:

Ethics is the critical and systematic study of moral values. Thus defined, ethics, among other things, focuses on the nature of right and wrong, and the good and the bad. From an ethical point of view, an action can be described as either right or wrong, whereas a person's character can be described as either good or bad. Philosophers commonly use the terms "ethics" and "morality" interchangeably. However, it is important to distinguish between the scope of ethics and the scope of morality.

Morality refers to the collection of customs, beliefs, and practices of cultures and societies. Given its scope and focus, morality is descriptive since it describes the actual beliefs and customs of cultures and societies.

Moral philosophy, unlike the descriptive role of morality, is the theoretical and philosophical reflection on morality. This critical and systematic activity seeks to understand moral concepts and to justify moral principles and theories. Furthermore, it analyzes such concepts as "right," "wrong," and "good", etc. The ultimate goal of moral philosophy is to produce moral theories as well as principles of right conduct to serve as guides for individuals and groups. Moral philosophy, unlike morality, is normative; it is not concerned merely with people's actual moral beliefs and how they actually behave but rather with what they ought to believe and do.

Ethics includes the complete domain of morality and moral philosophy. Hence, it constitutes the study of moral customs, beliefs and practices, as well as the principles and theories of right conduct, good character traits, and morally correct judgment. Finally, it also seeks to define the good life for human beings.

In this course, it will be important to distinguish between theoretical and applied ethics. Theoretical ethics deals with the abstract and theoretical aspects of ethics. Applied or practical ethics has as its goal practical clarity and guidance with regard to specific ethical problems. To this extent, it undertakes the project of clarifying, organizing and refining moral beliefs and ideals. It pursues the latter task for the purpose of appropriately cultivating moral experience, sensibilities and insights.

Course Objectives:

The objective of this course is to provide students with a critical philosophical appreciation and understanding of ethical theory. This objective will be pursued by actively focusing upon several

philosophical issues and moral theories: ethical relativism, psychological egoism, ethical egoism, utilitarianism, Kantianism, Virtue ethics, Feminist ethics, the nature of morality, euthanasia, and punishment. Students will also be able to distinguish the difference between theoretical and applied ethics.

Academic Expectations:

As a professor, I emphasize the importance of high academic performance by students. Hence, this course is conducted as a University-level course, and not as an extension of high school classes.

All students in this course are expected to have successfully made the transition from high school to University and are required to exhibit:

- Intellectual and personal maturity
- Serious attitude
- Clear priorities
- Self-discipline
- Commitment
- Work ethic
- Time management skills

Students should note that these intellectual and personal traits are not arbitrary, but are imperative for success in this course. One important difference that distinguishes college level classes from high school classes is that, in college, students are expected to actively embrace standards of academic excellence, as well as the intellectual maturity to assume the burden of the educational effort: the professor transmits information and answers questions, but it is the student's responsibility to become a motivated and "active" learner.

Another difference that separates a university experience from high school is the amount of study time that is required for a class. The established college norm is that, for every credit hour (i.e., standard 50-minute period) per week spent in the classroom, a student should plan on spending at least two hours per week, outside the classroom, reading and learning the subject matter of the course.

Since Florida Atlantic University is firmly dedicated to the academic success of all students, it follows the above-described expectations. Accordingly, each student in this course will be expected to complete at least two hours of course work outside of class for every one credit hour, that is, at least eight (8) hours of studying outside of class (reading, reviewing, or otherwise studying the material until it is adequately mastered).

As consistent with the academic expectations described above, students are required to come to class prepared, that is, they must read and assimilate the reading assigned during the previous class period and review previous lecture notes. This course will be conducted with the assumption that students are fully prepared in this manner.

Having access to all assigned readings is mandatory. Consequently, if a student is unable to purchase the textbooks at the beginning of the semester, it is his/her responsibility to find a way to access the assigned readings until he/she is able to purchase the books. Please note that no excuses will be accepted for not completing the required reading in a timely manner and as assigned.

Attendance is not taken in this class. However, given the abstract and complex nature of the subject matter, I strongly advise students to maintain perfect attendance, to arrive on time, and not to leave early (see also the "Policy on Classroom Conduct" on p. 5 of this syllabus).

Course Evaluation:

There will be three major examinations administered in this course: two regular examinations and a final cumulative examination. Each examination will count as 20% of your final grade and the final examination will count as 40% of your final grade. The dates of the first and second examinations will be announced in class. Since the exam dates are announced at least one week ahead of time, there is no acceptable excuse for missing an exam. Students will receive a '0' for each exam that is missed. **The final examination will be given on Tuesday, December 13, 2016 from 10:30am – 1:00pm.**

Students will also be required to complete no less than two hours of out-of-class assignments each week. These assignments will include the assigned readings for the course. Students should also note that these assignments will serve as the basis for weekly quizzes throughout the semester. The quizzes will count as 20% of the final grade. Please note that no make-up quizzes will be given

without adequate documentation.

The examinations, including the final examination, will constitute 80% of your final grade, and the quizzes will constitute 20% of your final grade.

Course Mechanics:

This course will consist of both lectures and discussions. Lectures will focus on assigned readings. Students will be given the opportunity to participate in discussions regarding the subject-matter of the course.

Students are expected to come to class, to be on time, and not to leave class early. Additional readings may be handed out either at the beginning or at the end of class. All announcements of relevance to the course and to the student's grade will be made either at the beginning or at the end of class. Thus, students coming to class late or leaving early will miss important information and will, as a consequence, jeopardize their own grade.

Students are expected to come to class prepared, i.e., they are expected to have done the reading assigned during the previous class period.

Students, as mentioned above, are also expected to be in class consistently. Since the learning process cannot take place without effort and class attendance, absences and lack of preparation will, inevitably, have a negative effect upon the student's final grade.

Grading Scale:

100-90: A
 89-88: B+
 87-80: B
 79-78: C+
 77-70: C
 69-68: D+
 67-60: D
 Below 59: F

Grading Policy:

Assignments	Percentage of Final Grade
Test #1	20%
Test #2	20%
Quizzes	20%
Final Exam	40%

Make-up Exams Policy and Late Work:

There will be absolutely no make-up work permitted in this course. The only exceptions will be for students participating in University-approved activities, students participating in a religious observance, or students who provide formal notation of a doctor's appointment.

Classroom Etiquette Policy:

The college or university classroom is a place for the conveyance of knowledge. Ideally, there is interaction between the professor and the students that helps facilitate the achievement of this goal.

For this reason, there exists a set of customary rules of courtesy that apply to classroom situations, particularly at the college level. Both professors and students have rights and responsibilities, both should respect the other, both should do all they can do to help the educational process to achieve its maximum effectiveness and to help the classroom truly become an environment for learning. The rules of conduct below are not exhaustive of what constitutes proper behavior. However, they provide some of the specific expectations that are to be met by students in this class.

Students are expected to come to class consistently, to be on time, and not to leave class early. Students coming to class late or leaving early will miss important information and will, as a consequence, jeopardize their own grade. The material is of a highly abstract and complex nature and cannot be immediately grasped without the assistance of the professor and, thus, without regular class attendance. Further, class lectures may appear to be incomprehensible if the student has not read the material previously assigned. Thus, although attendance is not formally taken in this class, absences and lack of preparation will reflect negatively upon the student's final grade.

Students are expected to come to class prepared, i.e., they are expected to have done the reading assigned during the previous class period. All lectures will be given using the reading as a reference, and having done the reading ahead of time will enable students not only to follow the lecture but also to contribute constructively to the class discussion.

Students should always communicate with the professor and with other students in a respectful manner. Standards of proper communication also apply to e-mail exchanges. E-mails should be courteous and respectful. Students should not expect an immediate response to their e-mails from the professor. However, under normal circumstance, a response to a student's e-mail will be sent in a timely manner.

Students are expected to be attentive to lectures, to questions raised by other students, and to classroom discussions in general. Students should avoid monopolizing or interrupting classroom discussion.

Eating and drinking in class, as well as the use any electronic devices, are not permitted. As well, video taping or recording of class lectures is not permitted. Cellular phones, personal computers, and pagers should be turned off. Students should wait until after class to return any calls received or to send text messages.

Dress Etiquette: All students should dress in a manner that is respectful of the values and traditions of the academy.

Disability Policy Statement:

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendments Act (ADAAA), students who require reasonable accommodations due to a disability to properly execute coursework must register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS)—in Boca Raton, SU 133 (561-297-3880); in Davie, LA 203 (954-236-1222); or in Jupiter, SR 110 (561-799-8585) —and follow all SAS procedures.

Honor Code:

Code of Academic Integrity policy statement: Students at Florida Atlantic University are expected to maintain the highest ethical standards. Academic dishonesty is considered a serious breach of these ethical standards, because it interferes with the university mission to provide a high quality education in which no student enjoys an unfair advantage over any other. Academic dishonesty is also destructive of the university community, which is grounded in a system of mutual trust and places high value on personal integrity and individual responsibility. Harsh penalties are associated with academic dishonesty. For more information, see

Policy on Plagiarism:

Plagiarism, the presenting of the words or ideas of another person as one's own, is a serious academic offense which may result in failure in a course or suspension from the University.

Quotation of another person's words must be indicated in one of the standard ways. This practice applies to all quoted material, including passages, sentences, and important parts of sentences used verbatim. Do not paraphrase or virtually quote passages by changing a few words or the word order.

Relating the information in a quote by using different word or expressions, without paraphrasing, also requires citation.

As well, the use of another person's ideas, even without quoting or paraphrasing, requires citation.

The source of all quoted matter and the source of all ideas and information that are taken from the work of another person and that are not a matter of general knowledge must be indicated by the proper use of reference notes. **Remember this:** When in doubt as to whether or not citation is required, it is better to be safe and use reference notes than not to use them.

If not familiar with the proper use of reference notes, either consult with your professor or consult one of the many reference sources available in the library (such as the MLA manual of style, the Chicago manual of style, or the APA (American Psychological Association) manual of style). Always inquire whether your professor has a particular stylistic preference regarding citations (that is, either MLA, Chicago style, or APA).

Remember this: Reference notes show that an idea or information came from a published source. Quotation marks show that the specific words of another person are being used. Students should be familiar with section 6C5-4.001 of the Florida Administrative Code (printed on p. 72 of the University Catalog), which describes the penalties incurred when students engage in academic irregularities such as plagiarism.

Cheating:

Cheating will not be tolerated in this course, and the students are expected to be familiar with the Florida Atlantic University Honor Code. Any student caught cheating will be submitted to the appropriate disciplinary measures as specified in the FAU code.

Required Texts:

James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 7th edition (McGraw-Hill: New York, 2013).

Heimir Geirsson and Margaret Holmgren, *Ethical Theory: A Concise Anthology*, 2nd Edition (Broadview Press: Toronto, 2010).

Kevin Gibson, *An Introduction to Ethics* (Upper Saddle River, NJ.: Pearson, 2014)

Assignments:

All reading assignments will be announced in class ahead of time. These assignments will be given at the end of each week for the coming week. It is absolutely important that students come to class

adequately prepared so as to benefit substantially from class lectures and discussions. Students should note that reading a philosophical text is quite challenging and demanding and, therefore, are strongly urged to spend quality time engaging with their texts.

Attendance Policy:

Students are strongly encouraged to attend class at all times. Excessive absences can be detrimental to a student's performance in this course. Students should take note of the fact that missing class because of work is not a legitimate excuse. Also, students are not allowed to leave class early to go to work or to arrive to class late because of work.

Policy on Incompletes:

Students should clearly understand that an "I" is not a substitution for not having done the course work. Similarly, it is not intended as an automatic second chance for a student to improve his/her grade.

However, should there be a case in which I believe that a student genuinely merits receiving a grade of 'I', the following university policy must and will be followed.

A student wishing to receive an 'I' (Incomplete) grade for this course must provide (a) a written request stating his/her reasons, and (b) evidence for these reasons to me.

Students should note that there are criteria that he/she must fulfill in order to be considered for an "I": the student must have completed at 75% of the course work and must be passing the course with at least a "C" average.

I will make the final judgment as to whether an 'I' is indeed appropriate. Please note that I will specify the deadline for completing the course work, and the default grade that the student will receive if he/she does not complete the work by the stated deadline.

In all cases, university policy states that if the student does not complete the assigned work by the established date, the Registrar's Office will automatically change the 'I' to an 'F'.

After the student has turned in all of the work required to complete the course, he/she bears full responsibility for confirming that the 'I' has been changed to a grade. Absolutely no exceptions will be made to this.

Extra Credit:

All of the formal requirements for this class are listed in the class syllabus. No student will be given the opportunity to complete additional work to better his/her performance in this class.

Drop-Dates:

The students are advised to keep the following dates in mind:

August 22: Last day to register/drop/add or withdraw with full refund.

August 29: Last day to register/drop/add or withdraw without receiving a W.

November 13: Last day to drop or withdraw without receiving F.

Officially dropping a course is the student's responsibility. If, for whatever reason, a student stops attending class, completing the assignments, or taking the tests, that student should make sure he/she officially drops this course. Otherwise, he/she will receive an 'F' in the course. No exceptions will be made to this.

Official Holidays and Breaks:

September 5: Labor Day.

October 10-11: Fall Break.

November 11: Veteran's Day.

November 24-27: Thanksgiving Recess.

Other Important Dates:

December 6: Last day of classes.

December 7: Reading Days

December 8-14: Final examination week.

December 19: Grades due in Registrar's office by 9:00 a.m.

Course Outline
Tentative Reading Schedule

Part I

Introduction to Ethical Theory

Titles	Reading Assignments
What is Morality	Rachels (pages 1-13)
Gibson: Introduction and Chapters 1 and 2	Pages 1-21

Relativism

Titles	Reading Assignments
The Challenge of Cultural Relativism	Rachels (pages 14-31)
Gibson: Chapter 4	Pages 34-41
Ethical Relativism	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 1-4)
Relativism and Objectivity in Ethics in	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 12-31)
*Out-of-Class Reflection	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 5-11 and 32-36)

Subjectivism

Titles	Reading Assignments
Subjectivism in Ethics	Rachels: pages 32-48)

Religion and Morality

Titles	Reading Assignments
Does Morality Depend on Religion?	Rachels (pages 49-63)
Divine Command Theory:	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 37-41)
<i>Euthyphro</i> by Plato	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 42-57)
*Out –of – Class Reflection: The Story of Abraham	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 58- 60)

Test #1 (The date will be announced in class and by email at least one week prior to the exam)

Part II

Egoism

Titles	Reading Assignments
Ethical Egoism	Rachels (pages 64-81)
Gibson: Chapter 3	Pages 22-32
Egoism	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 61-64)
The Myth of Gyges by Plato	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 65-73)

Morality and The Theory of the Social Contract

Titles	Reading Assignments
The Idea of a Social Contract	Rachels (pages 82-97)

Utilitarianism

Titles	Reading Assignments
The Utilitarian Approach	Rachels (pages 98-109)
The Debate Over Utilitarianism	Rachels (pages 110-124)
Gibson: Chapter 6	Pages 59-74
Consequentialism	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 85-89)
Selection from Utilitarianism by Mill	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 90-98)
*Out-of – Class Reflection: The Experience Machine, by Nozick	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 124-126)
*Out-of – Class Reflection: Rich and Poor	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 127-146)

Test #2 (The date will be announced in class and by email at least one week prior to the exam)

Part III

Kantianism

Titles	Reading Assignments
Are There Absolute Moral Rules?	Rachels (125-135)
Kant and Respect For Persons	Rachels (136-145)
Gibson: Chapter 7	Pages 75-88
Deontology	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 147-149)
The Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals by Kant	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 150-167)
*Out-of Class Reflection: A simplified version of Kant's Ethics by O'Neill	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 168-178)
*Out-of Class Reflection: Human Cloning	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 179-184)

Feminist Ethics

Titles	Reading Assignments
Feminism and the Ethics of Care	Rachels (pages 146-156)
Gibson: Chapter 10	Pages 120-129
Feminist Ethics	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 359-362)
Standard Moral Theories from a Feminist Perspective by Lindemann	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 363-372)
Women and caring by Noddings	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 373-381)
*Out-of-Class Reflection: Prostitution and the Case for Discrimination by Shrager	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 382-388)

Virtue Ethics

Titles	Reading Assignments
The Ethics of Virtue	Rachels (pages 157-172)
Gibson: Chapter 8	Pages 90-100
Virtue Ethics	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 299-302)
Nichomachean Ethics, by Aristotle	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 303-320)
On some Vices and Virtues Ethics, by Loudon	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 321-336)
*Out –of – Class Reflection: Virtue Theory and Abortion, Hursthouse	Geirsson and Holmgren (pages 337-358)

Ideal Moral Theory

Titles	Reading Assignments
What Would a Satisfactory Moral Theory Be Like?	Rachels (pages 173-183)
Gibson: Chapter 9	Pages 102-118
Gibson: Chapter 11	Pages 131-144

Cumulative Final examination: Tuesday, December 13, 2016 from 10:30am– 1:00pm.

* Indicates that students should complete these readings as part of their out-of-class assignments.