

**Missouri State University
College of Humanities and Public Affairs
Department of Philosophy**

**Fall 2016
Syllabus & Schedule**

Course: Ethics & Contemporary Issues, PHI 115, Sections 004, 005, 006

Credit hours: 3

Time and Location, Section 004: TR 11:00–12:15, Strong 201

Time and Location, Section 005: MWF 12:20–1:10, Strong 205

Time and Location, Section 006: MWF 2:30–3:20, Strong 201

Email: patrickbeach@missouristate.edu

Office: Strong 329

Telephone 417-836-5720 (I am easier to reach by email)

Office Hours: MWF 9:00–10:00, R 9:30–11:00, and by appointment

Course Website: blackboard.missouristate.edu

Communication Policy: I will respond to emails within 24 hours (but usually sooner). The same is expected of students.

Required Texts

- Steven M. Cahn. *Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Anthology*. Third. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014
- Supplemental materials will be posted on or linked from Blackboard.

Course Description

General Education Course (Focus on Public Issues). This course examines ethical principles and theories in relation to contemporary moral issues (e.g. euthanasia, capital punishment, economic justice, environmental issues, world hunger). Through a consideration of ideals of justice and human dignity, as well as concepts of rights and responsibilities, it also explores the moral requirements for community and justified political order.

Course Goals

- General Goal (1): Students will be able to develop the disposition and skills to gather, organize, refine, analyze, and evaluate critically information and ideas.
- General Goal (2): Students will be able to develop new ideas, products, or solutions and explore novel perspectives and approaches.
- General Goal (14): Students will be able to articulate their value systems, understand the ethical implications of their actions based on those values, and develop skills consistent with having a positive impact on individuals, groups, or communities.

Student Learning Outcomes

- SLO1.1 Identify and follow through on personally and socially relevant problems and reasonable solutions to those problems.
- SLO1.2 Identify relevant information sources, make reasoned choices among those sources, and open-mindedly follow where those sources lead.
- SLO1.3 Justify conclusions reached in the analysis of information.
- SLO1.4 Analyze evidence, statements, alternative viewpoints, graphics, and other forms of information.
- SL2.1 Develop creative and novel solutions to personally and socially relevant problems.
- SL2.2 Take account of novel, alternative, contradictory, and even radical viewpoints in creating new ideas, products, or solutions appropriate to the domain or subject matter.
- SL14.2 Understand the foundations for ethical thought and action.
- SL14.3 Identify areas of difficulty in responding to situations demanding ethical inquiry.
- SL14.4 Analyze complex ethical dilemmas facing the world.
- SL14.5 Employ supporting materials (e.g., explanations, examples, illustrations, statistics, analogies, and quotations from relevant authorities) in a manner that establishes the speaker's credibility/authority on the topic.

Course Requirements

Work Load Estimates: In a typical week, you should expect to devote about 9–12 hours to the reading and writing for this course. Sometimes the readings are long and sometimes they are quite difficult. You will need to invest time in preparing for class.

Means of Assessment: (A) Three exams and (B) low-stakes assignments (in-class quizzes, in-class writings, assigned writings, etc.). The exams are in-class (closed book and closed notes). Reading quizzes will be a regular in-class feature. Read the material carefully (take reading notes, mark up your text, whatever it takes to understand the material). If you do not come to class well prepared and on-time, your grade will suffer. Almost every class will have something that will contribute to the low-stakes grade.

Make Up Work: I do not allow make up work except in cases which can be documented for (a) a death in your family, (b) extreme illness, (c) religious observation, or (d) your representation of MSU in some official capacity (such as presenting at a conference). Any work to be made up for documented excuses must be made up within one week of your return to campus. My expectation is 100% attendance. At the end of the semester, I drop the lowest three scores of your low-stakes assignments (that gives you three misses for personal reasons that will not penalize you). This policy of dropping low-stakes scores is to cover instances where you have a good excuse for not being in class that does not meet the requirements for making up work listed above. For example, if you are sick (or someone you are caretaker for is sick) and there's no doctor's note documenting that, and you miss a quiz, you can't make it up, but it should not hurt your grade. Or, you have car problems or work and you miss an in-class assignment, you cannot make that work up, but it should not hurt your grade (because of the dropped low-stakes policy). The intent of the policy is to recognize that there are genuinely good reasons to miss a class (and perhaps in-class work), but to keep the administration of makeups to a reasonable level (the class of excuses in (a)–(d) above).

Clickers: Quizzes are given using TurningPoint clickers. It is your responsibility to register your clicker promptly and to bring it to *every* class. I give one pass per semester to writing your quiz on a piece of paper (forgot your clicker, its battery died, etc.). You must register your clicker promptly, using your MSU email. Registration instructions are here: http://www.missouristate.edu/assets/clickers/MSU_Student_Cloud_Account_Registration.pdf. Follow them exactly (they are specific in what you need to do). Tech support for clickers lives here: http://www.missouristate.edu/fctl/clickers/Tech_Support_How_To_Page.htm.

Extra Credit: I offer no extra credit. Take your grades seriously from day one of this course. At the end of the semester there is *nothing* you can do to improve your grade other than do your best on the remaining assignments.

Grading Proportions

Exams: 70%

Low-stakes assignments: 30%

Grading Scale

94–100% = A

90–93% = A-

87–89% = B+

84–86% = B

80–83% = B-

77–79% = C+

74–76% = C

70–73% = C-

67–69% = D+

60–66% = D

0–59% = F

See <http://www.missouristate.edu/registrar/catalog/grades.html> for an explanation of what the grades mean.

Advice

- Read the material carefully and take reading notes as you go along. Mark up the text in meaningful ways as you read. While I sometimes will give some guidance on the material before you read it, some of it will still be difficult. Be prepared to read and re-read the material. Philosophy *cannot* be skimmed.
- Look up terms you don't understand.
- Write summaries of the readings, and write up what you think are the muddiest points in your understanding of the material.
- Get help with any writing problems that you know you have. I can help you and the writing center can help you. I expect college-level reading and writing skills.
- Come to office hours, and we can talk about the material. I am the most informed person you can talk to about this class—and the best free tutor you have for this course. Or set up discussion groups and invite me to participate. Warning: my time becomes very tight before exams.
- Philosophy is a *content-laden* discipline. We will pay attention to a lot of fine-grained details. So while looking at the big picture helps, much of what we will attend to (and you will be responsible for) is at the micro level. The devil is in the details.

- Students may vary in their abilities to read and write at the college level. You can expect to acquire these abilities only if you honor all course policies, attend classes regularly, complete all assigned work in good faith and on time, and meet all other course expectations of you as a student.

Policies

- Students who cheat or plagiarize will fail the course with a grade of XF. Refer to the Academic Integrity Policies and Procedures. It is available at the reserve desk at Meyer Library and at http://www.missouristate.edu/policy/Op3_01_AcademicIntegrityStudents.htm
- Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. If you have a disability and may need accommodations to fully participate in this class, please visit the Disability Resource Center. <http://www.missouristate.edu/disability/>
- Respectful, professional, and civil conduct is the expected norm for the class.
- You are expected to check your MSU email daily and respond to any email that I send you (seeking a response) within 24 hours. You do not need to respond to informative emails from me. Any emails sent to me should be written to a professional standard (see “How to Email Your Professor” on Blackboard).
- The schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances, by mutual agreement, or to ensure better student learning.
- The first day of class will include a review of the Emergency Response Policies: <http://www.missouristate.edu/safetran/erp.htm>
- This class is technology free. That is, use of cell phones, tablets, and laptops is forbidden (except for those whose documented disability requires an electronic accommodation). Bring your reading to class every day (well read and marked up). Take copious lecture notes with pen or pencil and paper. As a courtesy, if you would like to record classes, please inform me.

Tentative Schedule

Last Updated: July 17, 2016
(Subject to Revision)

Note: Readings are in Steven M. Cahn, *Exploring Ethics: An Introductory Analogy, Third Edition* (Cahn) or are posted as PDFs on Blackboard (Bb) unless otherwise noted.

Week / Week of	Topics, Readings, & Tests	Assigned Work
1 Aug. 22	Topic 1: Moral Theories Beach, “Logic and Truth” (Bb) Beach, “Enthymemes and Rendering Arguments” (Bb)	
2 Aug. 29	Cahn, “God and Morality”(Cahn) Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism” (Cahn) Rachels, “Egoism and Moral Skepticism” (Cahn)	
3 Sept. 5	Kant, “The Categorical Imperative” (Cahn) O’Neill, “A Simplified Account of Kant’s Ethics” (Cahn)	Labor Day: Sept 5. No class.
4 Sept. 12	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i> (Cahn) Pojman, “Strengths and Weaknesses of Utilitarianism” (Cahn)	
5 Sept. 19	Aristotle, “The Nature of Virtue” (Cahn) Mayo, “Virtue Ethics” (Cahn) Exam 1: Sept. 22/23	Exam 1
6 Sept. 26	Topic 2: Abortion and Euthanasia Thomson, “A Defense of Abortion” (Cahn) Warren “On the Moral and Legal Justification of Abortion” (Cahn)	
7 Oct. 3	Marquis, “Why Abortion is Immoral” (Cahn)	
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Week / Week of	Topics, Readings, & Tests	Assigned Work
8 Oct. 10	Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory and Abortion" (Cahn) Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia" (Cahn)	
9 Oct. 17	Steinbock, "The Intentional Termination of Life" (Cahn) Exam 2: October 20/21	Exam 2
10 Oct. 24	Topic 3: Animal Rights and World Hunger Peter Singer, "Animal Liberation" (Video)	
11 Oct. 31	Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights" (Cahn) Cohen, "Why Animals Have No Rights" (Cahn)	
12 Nov. 7	Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" (Cahn) Arthur, "World Hunger and Moral Obligation: The Case Against Singer" (Cahn)	
13 Nov. 14	Topic 4: Capital Punishment and Terrorism Kant, "The Right of Punishing" (Bb) Bentham, "Of the Proportion between Punishments and Offenses" (Bb)	
Nov. 21	Thanksgiving Break	
14 Nov. 28	van den Haag, "The Ultimate Punishment: A Defense" (Bb) Nathanson, "An Eye for an Eye?" (Bb)	
15 Dec. 5	Walzer, "Terrorism" (Cahn) McPherson, "Is Terrorism Distinctively Wrong" (Cahn) Nathanson, "Can Terrorism Be Morally Justified?" (Bb)	Dec. 8: Last Day of Classes

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Week / Week of	Topics, Readings, & Tests	Assigned Work
Final		
Section 004	Thursday, December 15, 11:00–1:00	Final Exam
Section 005	Monday, December 12, 11:00–1:00	
Section 006	Monday, December 12, 1:15–3:15	