

Coastal Carolina University
College of Humanities and Fine Arts
Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Spring 2015
Syllabus & Tentative Schedule

Course: Introduction to Ethics, PHIL 102, Sections D1 & D2

Credit hours: 3

Time and Location: This is an on-line, asynchronous course with no class meetings. You will complete all your work on-line, and class attendance will be based on your participation and completion of on-line activities. Weeks will begin at 12:01 a.m. on Mondays and end at 11:59 p.m. on Sundays.

Instructor: Patrick Beach, Ph.D. (please call me “Dr. Beach” or “Professor Beach”)

Email: pbeach@coastal.edu

Office: 124 Sands Hall

Telephone 843-349-4049

Office Hours: Face-to-Face: Mondays and Thursdays 1:00–2:30; Virtual (through Moodle Chat): Wednesdays 4–6:30; and by appointment (either face-to-face or virtual)

Course Website: moodle.coastal.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 Moodle.

Course Description

This course introduces students to the three main areas of philosophical ethics, metaethics, normative ethics and applied ethics. Students will explore metaethical issues such as ethical subjectivism and objectivism, moral skepticism, free will and responsibility; major normative theories such as consequentialism and deontology; and applied ethical issues such as animal rights, war, and cloning. The overarching goal will be for students to develop the skills necessary for thinking, writing, and speaking about ethical theories and problems while acquiring a basic understanding of these theories and problems.

Course Objectives

Students who are successful in the course will be able to . . .

1. Summarize and appraise philosophical texts.
2. Explain ideas clearly and precisely in well-organized prose.
3. Reconstruct and evaluate arguments. Particular attention ought to be paid to their internal structure (premises vs. the conclusions they aim to support).
4. Demonstrate mastery of and appraise central philosophical concerns in metaethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics.

Student Learning Outcomes

1. Use basic philosophical terms and concepts accurately.
2. Apply basic rules of formal and informal reasoning.
3. Describe central philosophical positions pertaining to the problems addressed in the course.
4. Explain the significance of central philosophical problems.
5. Identify and evaluate philosophical arguments and objections.
6. Formulate questions, arguments and objections concerning the philosophical issues addressed in the course.

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. In addition, since this course is completely on-line, for most students it will require a larger (not smaller) time investment than for a face-to-face course.

Means of Assessment: (A) Best three exams (out of four), (B) best ten reading quizzes (out of about 12), (C) best four discussion boards (of five or six), and (D) a final evaluation. The reading quizzes can be taken twice. The questions for the quizzes and exams are randomly drawn from a large pool of questions.

Extra Credit: I offer very little in terms of extra credit (maybe one or two small things). All extra credit is offered to everyone equally, so if at the end of the semester your grade is coming up short, there's nothing that can be done about that. So take your grades seriously from day one of this course.

Attendance Policy: Students are obligated to attend class regularly. I measure attendance by whether you complete the required submissions on time. If there is a reading quiz and a discussion board assignment, that counts as two attendances. If there is only one item due, that counts as one attendance. So, basically you need to complete the assignments on time more than 75% of the time to pass the course.

Absences will be excused for documented cases of:

1. incapacitating illness,
2. official representation of the University (excuses for official representation of the University should be obtained from the official supervising the activity),
3. death of a close relative, and
4. religious holidays.

Students who miss more than 25% of the regularly scheduled class meetings with unexcused absences will fail the course.

See <http://www.coastal.edu/policies/pdf/acad-125classattendance.pdf> for Coastal's official attendance policy.

Note that since this is an on-line course, if you miss an assignment for a planned event, such as representing Coastal on a debate team, I will be hard pressed to accept that as an excuse if you could easily complete the assignment earlier in the week in which it is due.

Grading Proportions

- Best 10 on-line reading quizzes: 25%
- Best three exams: 50%
- Best four discussion board assignments: 15%
- Final evaluation: 10%

Grading Scale

- 90–100% = A
- 86–89% = B+
- 80–85% = B
- 76–79% = C+
- 70–75% = C
- 66–69% = D+
- 60–65% = D
- 0–59% = F

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.
- Watch all slide presentations and take good notes on them. (I will provide the slides that you can print out and annotate as you watch the videos.) Note that there will not be a slide presentation every week (but most weeks).
- 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 (face-to-face or virtually) and we can talk about the material. I am the most informed person you can talk to about this class—I am the best free tutor you have for this course. Or set up discussion groups (face-to-face or virtually) 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. Refer to the Student Code of Conduct for details. <http://www.coastal.edu/conduct/documents/codeofconduct.pdf>
- Students are expected to follow Coastal Carolina University's community standards: "Coastal Carolina University is an academic community that expects the highest standards of honesty, integrity and personal responsibility. Members of this community are accountable for their actions and are committed to creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust."
- 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 Accessibility and Disability Services office. (A fairly complete list of support services is on the course Moodle page under the link "Student Support".)

- Respectful, professional, and civil conduct is the expected norm for the class.
- You are expected to check your CCU 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 the course Moodle site).
- 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.

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 Moodle unless otherwise noted.

Week / Week of	Topics, Readings, & Tests	Assigned Work
1	Topic 1: Metaethics	
Jan. 12	Introduction Beach, “Logic and Truth” (moodle) & Beach, “Enthymemes and Rendering Arguments” (moodle)	Reading Quiz on Syllabus
2	Regan, “How Not to Answer Moral Questions” Cahn, “God and Morality”	Reading Quiz on Regan, Cahn, Rachels
Jan. 19	Rachels, “The Challenge of Cultural Relativism”	Discussion Board 1
3	Nagel, “Right and Wrong”	Reading Quiz on Nagel, Rachels
Jan. 26	Rachels, “Egoism and Moral Skepticism”	Discussion Board 2
4	Cahn & Murphy, “Happiness and Immorality”	Reading Quiz on Cahn & Murphy, Stevenson
Feb. 2	Stevenson, “The Nature of Ethical Disagreement” Exam 1: Due Feb. 8	Exam 1: Feb. 8
5	Topic 2: Moral Theories	
Feb. 9	Kant, “The Categorical Imperative” and O’Neill, “A Simplified Account of Kant’s Ethics”	Reading Quiz Discussion Board 3
6	Mill, <i>Utilitarianism</i>	Reading Quiz
Feb. 16	Pojman, “Strengths and Weaknesses of Utilitarianism”	Discussion Board 4
continued on next page		

Week / Week of	Topics, Readings, & Tests	Assigned Work
7 Feb. 23	Aristotle, "The Nature of Virtue" and Mayo, "Virtue Ethics" Exam 2: Due March 1	Reading Quiz Exam 2: March 1
8 Mar. 2	Topic 3: Abortion and Euthanasia Thomson, "A Defense of Abortion" and Warren "On the Moral and Legal Justification of Abortion"	March 5: Mid-term grades due by 5 p.m. Reading Quiz
Mar. 9	Spring Break	
9 Mar. 16	Marquis, "Why Abortion is Immoral"	Reading Quiz Discussion Board 5
10 Mar. 23	Hursthouse, "Virtue Theory and Abortion" Rachels, "Active and Passive Euthanasia"	Reading Quiz
11 Mar. 30	Steinbock, "The Intentional Termination of Life" Exam 3: April 5	Reading Quiz Exam 3: April 5
12 Apr. 6	Topic 3: Animal Rights and World Hunger Peter Singer, "Animal Liberation"	
13 Apr. 13	Regan, "The Case for Animal Rights" Cohen, "Why Animals Have No Rights"	Reading Quiz Discussion Board 6
14 Apr. 20	Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality" Arthur, "World Hunger and Moral Obligation: The Case Against Singer"	Reading Quiz
15 Apr. 27	Review Exam 4: April 27	April 29: Last day of classes April 30: Study day

continued on next page

Week / Week of	Topics, Readings, & Tests	Assigned Work
Final May 7	Final Evaluation: May 7 by 5 p.m. (It may, of course, be completed earlier)	Final posted the first day of finals, due the last day