

Syllabus

Professor

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Office: Hellems 192
Office Hours: Tues., 2:00-4:00, and by appt.

Course Description

We make value judgments – e.g., “You shouldn’t litter,” “It’s unfair that some children have no health care,” “Friendship makes life worth living,” “Abortion is wrong,” “Rod Blagojevich is a scumbag” – all the time. But what are we doing when we do this? Are we describing an objective moral reality, or ultimately just expressing our feelings? Are such statements ever true? Can we ever know one to be true? If there are moral facts, are they just a subclass of the natural facts about the world? Assuming that we do have moral obligations, why should we care about them? These are some questions in *metaethics*, to which the first part of this course will provide an introduction.

Then we will turn to *normative ethics*, where we attempt to figure out which moral claims – in particular, which fundamental moral principles – are actually true. Our main questions will be, What makes an act right or wrong?, and, What makes a state of affairs good or bad? *Consequentialists* believe that an act’s rightness or wrongness is to be explained solely in terms of how good or bad its outcome would be. We will explore this theory in detail, as well as theories about what makes an outcome good or bad. *Deontologists* reject the view that consequences are all that matter. They typically believe that we have *special obligations* (e.g., to our children, to people we have made agreements with) that are not explained by the value of outcomes. Deontologists also often believe in *constraints* against certain kinds of behavior (e.g., lying, killing) even when doing so would lead to the best outcome. We will explore deontology in some detail.

Course Website

The course website, which you should check regularly, can be found here:

<http://spot.colorado.edu/~heathwoo/phil3100/>

Here you will find:

- a copy of this syllabus
- many of the readings for the course
- accounts of what we did in class each day (check this first if you miss a class)
- study guides for exams
- guidance on papers
- other important course information.

Readings

One book is required:

- Michael Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
ISBN: 0230573746.

It is available at the CU Bookstore. There will be many additional required readings, which will be available on the course website.

Requirements

1. Technology. You must have an email account and regular access to the internet, and you must check your colorado.edu email address and the course website frequently. You also must have regular access to a printer in order to print out readings from the website.

Text messaging during class is strictly prohibited. First-time offenders will be asked to leave their phones on my desk for the remainder of class; repeat offenders will be excused from class. When you get to class, *turn your cell phone OFF.*

If you use a laptop in class, you may use it only for course-related activities (e.g., taking notes). No emailing, instant messaging, facebooking, myspacing, tweeting, youtubing, web surfing, online poker, etc.

2. Many Pop Quizzes (10%). To do well in this class, you must attend class regularly, arrive on time, complete each reading assignment on time, take notes on readings and in class, ask questions when you have them, and contribute to class discussions. There will be pop quizzes designed to test whether you have done the assigned reading and have been coming to class. *They are open-note, but not open-book.* If you keep up with the readings, come to class, take notes on both, and ask questions when you have them, the quizzes should be easy. If you don't do these things, you will fail them. There will probably be between 10 and 12 of these quizzes throughout the semester. You will be permitted to drop your lowest quiz score.

3. Two Response Papers (15%). You are required to write two short critical response papers (see below for due dates). These are 2-3 page (~600-900 word) papers in which you offer your own idea on something we have read. One common sort of response paper will present and explain your own objection to some claim or argument advanced in a reading. Late response paper will be penalized unless you have a legitimate, documented excuse.

4. Three Exams (60%). There will be three exams during the semester, one for each unit of the course (see below for dates). These will be in-class, short-answer, bluebook exams. To help you prepare, and to give you an idea about the sorts of questions you can expect, a study guide will be made available before each exam.

During our assigned final exam slot (Tues., Dec. 14, 7:30 p.m.), instead of a having a final exam, we will hold "Take-Over Day," for those interested. You will be permitted to take over one of your previous exams to improve your score on it. The take-over exam won't necessarily have the same questions as the original exam, but it will cover the same material (and the same study guide will apply). If you don't improve your score on the take-over exam, this won't hurt you - we will keep your original score. Take-Over Day is optional.

If you miss an exam during the semester, you will be permitted to take a make-up exam only if you have a legitimate, documented excuse (e.g., non-trivial illness, death in the family, religious obligation). Otherwise, you can use Take-Over Day to make-up your exam. If you must miss an exam, you need to let me know *in advance.*

5. One Term Paper (15%). One 5-7 page (~1,500-2,000 word) term paper is required (see below for due date). The paper will give you a chance to defend your own view about one of the topics discussed in the class (e.g., you can defend a positive position on one of our topics, or you can offer your own criticism of an argument defended in one of our readings). I'll have more to say about papers later. Late papers will be penalized unless you have a legitimate, documented excuse.

Grading

Your final grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Weekly Quizzes	10%	20 points
First Response Paper	7.5%	15 points
Exam 1	20%	40 points
Second Response Paper	7.5%	15 points
Exam 2	20%	40 points
Exam 3	20%	40 points
Term Paper	15%	30 points

TOTAL:	100%	200 points

Remember that you can take over one of the three exams (on Tues., Dec. 14, 7:30 p.m.) to improve your score.

We will use a standard “non-curved” grading scale, as follows:

185-200	A	175-179	B+	155-159	C+	135-139	D+	0-119	F
180-184	A-	165-174	B	145-154	C	120-134	D		
		160-164	B-	140-144	C-				

A Possible Course Schedule (subject to change)

EI = our only book, *Ethical Intuitionism*. All other readings on course website.

[wk]	Date	Topic	Readings (due on date listed)
[1]	Tu 8/24	First Day Stuff, Philosophy, Ethics, Metaethics	
	Th 8/26	Metaethical Taxonomy, Propositions, Necessity, Analyticity, <i>A priority</i>	<i>EI</i> , Introduction Van Cleve, “Necessity, Analyticity, and the <i>A Priori</i> ,” 15-27.
[2]	Tu 8/31	Non-Cognitivism, Ayer’s Empiricism	Ayer, “Critique of Ethics and Theology,” 102-113. <i>EI</i> , § 2.1
	Th 9/2	The Embedding and the Frege- Geach Problems for Non-Cog.	<i>EI</i> , §§ 2.2, 2.3, 2.8 (rest of ch. 2 optional)
[3]	Tu 9/7	Subjectivism, Motivational Internalism, Disagreement	Hume, excerpts on subjectivism <i>EI</i> , §§ 3.1-3.3 Moore, “The Nature of Moral Philosophy,” 329-334.
	Th 9/9	Divine Command Theory, The Euthyphro Problem	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> (excerpt) <i>EI</i> , §§ 3.4-3.6
[4]	Tu 9/14	Reductionism	Moore, <i>Principia Ethica</i> (excerpt) <i>EI</i> , §§ 4.1-4.2
	Th 9/16	The Open-Question Argument	<i>EI</i> , § 4.3.1
[5]	Tu 9/21	Intuitionism	Ross, excerpt <i>EI</i> , §§ 5.1-5.4
	Th 9/23	Nihilism, Moral Disagreement First Response Paper Due	Mackie, “The Subjectivity of Values” <i>EI</i> , ch. 6

[6]	Tu 9/28	REVIEW FOR EXAM #1	
	Th 9/30	Exam #1 - Metaethics	
[7]	Tu 10/5	Normative Ethics of Behavior, Utilitarianism	Mill, excerpts from <i>Utilitarianism</i> Feldman, "What is Act Utilitarianism?"
	Th 10/7	Utilitarianism: Arguments for and Against	Feldman, "Act Utilitarianism: Arguments Pro and Con," pp. 36-41 (rest optional)
[8]	Tu 10/12	Utilitarianism and Promises, and other problems.	Feldman, "Problems for Act Utilitarianism," 52-60. Ross, excerpt from <i>The Right and the Good</i>
	Th 10/14	Axiology, Welfare, Hedonism	Heathwood, "Welfare" Bentham, excerpt from <i>IPML</i>
[9]	Tu 10/19	Arg. from Psych. Hedonism, The Experience Machine	Nozick, "The Experience Machine"
	Th 10/21	Desire-Fulfillment Theory, Objective List Theory	Parfit, "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best?" Ross, "What Things Are Good?"
[10]	Tu 10/26	REVIEW FOR EXAM #2	
	Th 10/28	Exam #2 - Utilitarianism, Axiology	
[11]	Tu 11/2	Kant's Categorical Imperative Second Response Paper Due	Kant, excerpts from <i>Groundwork</i> Feldman, "Kant I," up to p. 106.
	Th 11/4	Kant's Categorical Imperative	Feldman, "Kant I," the rest.
[12]	Tu 11/9	Deontology	McNaughton and Rawling, "Deontology," §§ 4, 5.2 optional.
	Th 11/11	Rossian Pluralism	Ross, excerpts from <i>The Right and the Good</i> .
[13]	Tu 11/16	The Doctrine of Double Effect	Foot, "Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect"
	Th 11/18	Killing vs. Letting Die	Thomson, "Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem"
[14]	Tu 11/30	Experimental Philosophy	Greene, "An fMRI Investigation of Emotional Engagement in Moral Judgment."
	Th 12/2	REVIEW FOR EXAM #3	
[15]	Tu 12/7	Exam #3 - Deontology	
	Th 12/9	FCQ's, return Exam #3, Term Papers Due	
[16]	Tu 12/14	Take-Over Day, 7:30 p.m., CLUB 13	

Class Mates

So that you will have someone from whom to get the notes (and any other pertinent info) should you miss class, introduce yourself to two classmates and write their information here:

Name:

Email:

Phone:

Issues, Complaints, etc.

If something is bothering you about the course, the readings, your classmates, the classroom environment, me, or anything related to our course, please do not hesitate to discuss the problem with me. If you don't feel like I am dealing with it to your satisfaction, please bring your problem to the attention of our department chair, Graeme Forbes (graeme.forbes@colorado.edu), and/or our director of undergraduate studies, Wes Morrison (wes.morrison@colorado.edu).

Academic Integrity

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-725-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at colorado.edu/policies/honor.html and at colorado.edu/academics/honorcode.

Anyone caught violating the academic integrity policy (in any way) will automatically receive an F for this course and be subject to further sanctions from the Honor Code office.

Disability Services

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to me a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, and colorado.edu/disabilityservices.

Religious Observances

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to reasonably and fairly deal with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments, or required attendance. Please let me know well in advance about any such conflicts, so we can resolve them. Your class participation grade will not be negatively affected due to such conflicts. For more information about the university's policies on these matters, see colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html.

Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, culture, religion, politics, sexual orientation, gender, gender variance, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information about the university's policies on these matters, see colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html and colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code.

Discrimination and Harassment

The University of Colorado at Boulder policy on Discrimination and Harassment, the University of Colorado policy on Sexual Harassment and the University of Colorado policy on Amorous Relationships apply to all students, staff and faculty. Any student, staff or faculty member who believes s/he has been the subject of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at www.colorado.edu/odh.