

Philosophy 3100  
Ethical Theory  
Spring 2009

MWF 12:00-12:50  
EDUC 231

## Syllabus

### Professor

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Office Hours: Wed., 3:30-5:30, and by appt.

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### Course Description

We make value judgments – e.g., “It’s wrong to eat meat,” “The situation in the Middle East right now is really bad,” “Happiness is good” – all the time. But what are we doing when we do this? Are we describing an objective moral reality, or 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? 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 which moral claims – and 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 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 believe we often have *options* to pursue our own interests even when that will lead to a worse outcome, impartially speaking. They also believe in *constraints* against certain kinds action (e.g., killing) even when that would lead to the best outcome. We will explore deontology in detail.

### Course Website

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

<http://spot.colorado.edu/~heathwoo/phil3600/>

Here you will find:

- a copy of this syllabus
- additional course readings
- 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. Many additional required readings will be made 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. Finally, *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*.

**2. Weekly 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 weekly 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. You will be permitted to drop your lowest quiz score.

**3. Exams (15%, 15%, 15%, 30%).** There will be three exams (15% ea.) during the semester and a cumulative final exam (30%) during finals week (see Course Schedule 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.

If you miss an exam, 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). If it was at all possible, *you must let me know in advance that you must miss an exam*.

**4. Term Paper (15%).** One 5-7 page term papers is required (see Course Schedule 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
Exam 1	15%	30 points
Exam 2	15%	30 points
Exam 3	15%	30 points
Term Paper	15%	30 points
Final Exam	30%	60 points

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TOTAL:                    100%       200 points

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.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings (due on date listed)</b>
[1] M 1/12	First Day Stuff	
W 1/14	The Field of Metaethics	<i>EI</i> , Preface, Introduction
F 1/16	The Field of Metaethics	
[2] M 1/19	<b>NO CLASS - MLK DAY</b>	
W 1/21	Non-Cognitivism	Ayer, “Critique of Ethics and Theology,” pp. 102-113 (rest optional) <i>EI</i> , §§ 2.1
F 1/23	Non-Cognitivism	<i>EI</i> , §§ 2.2, 2.3, 2.8 (rest optional)
[3] M 1/26	Subjectivism	Hume, excerpts on subjectivism <i>EI</i> , §§ 3.1-3.3
W 1/28	Subjectivism / Divine Command Theory	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> (excerpt) <i>EI</i> , § 3.4
F 1/30	Subjectivism	<i>EI</i> , §§ 3.5-3.6
[4] M 2/2	Analytic Reductionism and the Open Question Argument	Moore, <i>Principia Ethica</i> (excerpt) <i>EI</i> , §§ 4.1-4.2
W 2/4	The Is/Ought Gap	<i>EI</i> , § 4.3
F 2/6	Synthetic Reductionism	<i>EI</i> , § 4.4
[5] M 2/9	Intuitionism	Ross, excerpt <i>EI</i> , §§ 5.1-5.4
W 2/11	Nihilism	Mackie, “The Subjectivity of Values” <i>EI</i> , § 5.5
F 2/13	Moral Disagreement	<i>EI</i> , ch. 6
[6] M 2/16	REVIEW FOR EXAM #1	
W 2/18	<b>Exam #1 - Metaethics</b>	
F 2/20	NO CLASS	
[7] M 2/23	Normative Ethics of Behavior, Utilitarianism	Mill, excerpts from <i>Utilitarianism</i> Feldman, excerpts from <i>Introductory Ethics</i>
W 2/25	Utilitarianism	Ross, excerpt from <i>The Right and the Good</i>

F 2/27	Utilitarianism	
[8] M 3/2	Axiology, Hedonism	Bentham, excerpts
W 3/4	Hedonism, Preferentism	Nozick, "The Experience Machine" Parfit, "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best?"
F 3/6	Objective List Theory	Ross
[9] M 3/9	Egalitarianism	Parfit, "Equality and Priority," §§1-4
W 3/11	Prioritarianism	Parfit, "Equality and Priority," §§5-8
F 3/13	Applications: Animals	Norcross, "Puppies, Pigs, and People," pp. 229-236 (rest optional)
[10] M 3/16	Applications: Famine Relief	Singer, "Famine, Affluence, and Morality"
W 3/18	REVIEW FOR EXAM #2	
F 3/20	<b>Exam #2 - Utilitarianism, Axiology</b>	
<b>S P R I N G   B R E A K</b>		
[11] M 3/30	Kant's Categorical Imperative	Kant, excerpts from <i>Groundwork</i> Feldman, "Kant I"
W 4/1	Kant's Categorical Imperative	
F 4/3	Rossian Pluralism	Ross, excerpts from <i>The Right and the Good</i>
[12] M 4/6	Deontology	McNaughton and Rawling, "Deontology," through §3
W 4/8	Deontology	McNaughton and Rawling, "Deontology," §§ 4-6
F 4/10	Deontology	
[13] M 4/13	The Doctrine of Double Effect	Foot, "Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect"
W 4/15	The Doctrine of Double Effect	Quinn, "Actions, Intentions, and Consequences"
F 4/17	Killing vs. Letting Die	Thomson, "Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem"
[14] M 4/20	Killing vs. Letting Die	
W 4/22	REVIEW FOR EXAM #3	
F 4/24	<b>Exam #3 - Deontology</b>	
[15] M 4/27	Meetings about Papers	
W 4/29	<b>Term Papers Due, FCQ's, REVIEW FOR FINAL</b>	

F 5/1	REVIEW FOR FINAL	
M 5/4	<b>Final Exam</b> , 4:30-7:00 p.m.	

**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, David Boonin (David.Boonin@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 [www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html) and at [www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/](http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/).

*Anyone caught violating the academic integrity policy (in any way) will automatically receive an F for this course, and may be subject to expulsion from the university.*

**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 [www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices](http://www.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

be not be negatively affected due to such conflicts. For more information about the university's policies on these matters, see [www.colorado.edu/policies/fac\\_relig.html](http://www.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 [www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html) and [www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student\\_code](http://www.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](http://www.colorado.edu/odh).