

Syllabus

Professor

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Office: Hellems 192
Office Hours: Wed., 2:00-5:00 p.m., 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,” “Tiger Woods is a scumbag” – 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, and if so, how? If there are moral facts, are they just a subclass of the natural facts about the world? Assuming 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 to whom we have made promises) that are not explained by the value of outcomes. Deontologists also often believe in *constraints* against certain kinds of behavior (e.g., killing) even when doing so 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/phil3100honors/>

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. There will be many additional required readings, which will be made available on the course website.

Requirements

1. Participation and Attendance (5%, plus). 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. I will be keeping track of all of this, and it will affect your grade.

Because this is a small honors course, the hope is that it will be more discussion-oriented and less lecture-oriented than most courses. It is thus imperative that everyone attends regularly. For this reason, *you will be allowed only four absences* – “excused” or not (though I hope many of you will have more like zero or one absence). For each absence after that – “excused” or not – your final grade for the course will be brought down one notch (e.g., A- to B+, B to B-, etc.). Do not to use up your free absences for frivolous reasons; save them for when you are really sick.

Further elements of the participation requirement involve *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 stop; additional offenses will result in dismissal from class and losing credit for attending. 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, youtubing, web surfing, online poker, etc.

2. Three Short Papers (30%). You are required to write three 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.

3. Two Exams (35%). There will be two exams: a midterm and a final. These will be in-class, short-answer, bluebook exams (see below for dates). 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. Our final exam will take place on Saturday, May 1, 7:30-10:00 p.m. in HLMS 177.

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 you must miss an exam, you need to let me know *in advance*.

4. One Presentation (10%). Each student will do a 20-25 minute presentation towards the end of the semester on the topic of his/her term paper. The goal is to explain the thesis and the main argument(s) of your term paper, while first providing whatever background is necessary to do that. These presentations are to help you get going on your term paper, to help you clarify your project, and to enable you to receive feedback on it from the class. In order to allow time for questions, suggestions, and discussion, you should prepare about 15 minutes worth of material for your 20-25 minute presentation.

5. One Term Paper (20%). One 7-10 page (2,000-3,000 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). Your term paper can be a development of one of your short papers. 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:

Participation	5%	10 points
First Short Paper	10%	20 points
Second Short Paper	10%	20 points
Midterm Exam	15%	30 points
Third Short Paper	10%	20 points
Presentation	10%	20 points
Term Paper	20%	40 points
Final Exam	20%	40 points

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.

Date	Topic	Readings (due on date listed)
[1] M 1/11	First Day Stuff	
W 1/13	The Field of Metaethics	<i>EI</i> , Introduction
F 1/15	The Field of Metaethics	
[2] M 1/18	NO CLASS - MLK DAY	
W 1/20	Non-Cognitivism	Ayer, “Critique of Ethics and Theology,” pp. 102-113 (rest optional) <i>EI</i> , §§ 2.1
F 1/22	Non-Cognitivism	<i>EI</i> , §§ 2.2, 2.3, 2.8 (rest optional)
[3] M 1/25	Non-Cognitivism	
W 1/27	Subjectivism	Hume, excerpts on subjectivism <i>EI</i> , §§ 3.1-3.3
F 1/29	Subjectivism / Divine Command Theory	Plato, <i>Euthyphro</i> (excerpt) <i>EI</i> , § 3.4
[4] M 2/1	Subjectivism First Short Paper Due	<i>EI</i> , §§ 3.5-3.6
W 2/3	Analytic Reductionism and the Open Question Argument	Moore, <i>Principia Ethica</i> (excerpt) <i>EI</i> , §§ 4.1-4.2
F 2/5	Intuitionism	Ross, excerpt <i>EI</i> , §§ 5.1-5.4
[5] M 2/8	Nihilism	Mackie, “The Subjectivity of Values” <i>EI</i> , § 5.5

W 2/10	Moral Disagreement	<i>EI</i> , ch. 6
F 2/12	Normative Ethics of Behavior, Utilitarianism	Mill, excerpts from <i>Utilitarianism</i> Feldman, excerpts from <i>Introductory Ethics</i>
[6] M 2/15	Utilitarianism	
W 2/17	Utilitarianism and Promises	Ross, excerpt from <i>The Right and the Good</i>
F 2/19	Rule Utilitarianism	Smart, "Extreme and Restricted Utilitarianism"
[7] M 2/22	Axiology, Hedonism	Bentham, excerpts Parfit, "What Makes Someone's Life Go Best?"
W 2/24	Hedonism	Nozick, "The Experience Machine"
F 2/26	Preferentism	Kraut, "Desire and the Human Good"
[8] M 3/1	Objective List Theory Second Short Paper Due	Ross, "What Things Are Good?"
W 3/3	REVIEW FOR MIDTERM	
F 3/5	MIDTERM EXAM - Metaethics, Utilitarianism, Axiology	
[9] M 3/8	Kant's Categorical Imperative	Kant, excerpts from <i>Groundwork</i> Feldman, "Kant I"
W 3/10	Kant's Categorical Imperative	
F 3/12	Kant's Categorical Imperative	
[10] M 3/15	Rossian Pluralism	Ross, excerpts from <i>The Right and the Good</i>
W 3/17	Rossian Pluralism	
F 3/19	More Deontology	reading TBA
S P R I N G B R E A K		
[11] M 3/30	The Doctrine of Double Effect	Foot, "Abortion and the Doctrine of Double Effect"
W 4/1	The Doctrine of Double Effect	
F 4/3	Killing vs. Letting Die Third Short Paper Due	Thomson, "Killing, Letting Die, and the Trolley Problem"
[12] M 4/6	Killing vs. Letting Die	
W 4/8	(catch up day)	
F 4/10	Student Presentations	
[13] M 4/13	Student Presentations	
W 4/15	Student Presentations	
F 4/17	Student Presentations	
[14] M 4/20	Student Presentations	
W 4/22	Student Presentations	
F 4/24	Student Presentations	
[15] M 4/27	Student Presentations	
W 4/29	Term Paper Due	
F 4/30	REVIEW FOR FINAL EXAM	
Sa 5/1	FINAL EXAM, 7:30 p.m. - 10:00 p.m., HLMS 177	

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 and at 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.

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 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 and 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.